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FOREIGN POLICY

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IN BLOW TO RUSSIA, FINLAND
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INDIA'S GDP TO 6.3%

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY APRIL 5, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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India raps China: Inventing names doesn't alter fact

'Arunachal Pradesh integral part of India'
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after China gave new names to 11 more places in Arunachal Pradesh, India on Tuesday categorically rejected the exercise and said assigning "invented" names does not alter the fact that the eastern State is an integral part of the country. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of its territory and calls the State "Zangnan, the southern part of Tibet".

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said here India outrightly rejected China's renaming of the places in Arunachal Pradesh.

"We have seen such reports. This is not the first time China has made such an attempt. We reject this outright," Bagchi said. "Arunachal Pradesh is, has been, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India. Attempts to assign invented names will not alter this reality," he said.

It was the third batch of standardised geographical names for Arunachal Pradesh issued by China's Civil Affairs Ministry.

The first batch of the standardised names of six places in



Arunachal Pradesh was released in 2017 while the second batch of 15 places was issued in 2021.

The official names of the 11 places were released on Sunday by China's Ministry of Civil Affairs. It also gave precise coordinates, including two land areas, two residential areas, five mountain peaks and two rivers and listed the category of places' names and their subordinate administrative districts, state-run *Global Times* reported on Monday.

China's renaming of the places in Arunachal Pradesh came in the midst of the lingering eastern Ladakh border

standoff that began in May 2020. Following the standoff, India bolstered its overall military preparedness along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Arunachal Pradesh sector as well.

Last month, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said the situation along the LAC in eastern Ladakh remained "very fragile" and is "quite dangerous" in military assessment because of close deployments of troops of both sides in some pockets though "substantial" progress has been made in the disengagement process in many areas.

The Indian and Chinese

troops are locked in a nearly three-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement of troops from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

According to *The Global Times*, which is part of the ruling Communist Party's mouthpiece People's Daily group of publications in China, the Chinese authorities are calling this move "standardised geographical names".

The first set of names was announced by China in 2017 days after the Dalai Lama's visit to Arunachal Pradesh. China was sharply critical of the Tibetan spiritual leader's visit.

The Dalai Lama fled from Tibet through Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh and sought refuge in India in 1959 after China took military control of the Himalayan region in 1950.

India and Chinese troops had clashed along the LAC in the State's Tawang sector last December, in a face-off that came amid a months-long border standoff in eastern Ladakh.

Following the standoff, India bolstered its military preparedness along the LAC in the Arunachal Pradesh as well.

Trump arrested, says 'not guilty'

AP/PTI ■ NEW YORK/WASHINGTON

Former US President Donald Trump was on Tuesday arrested as he arrived to surrender at the Manhattan criminal court for his arraignment on history-making criminal charges related to paying hush money to a porn star before the 2016 presidential election in exchange for her silence.

Shortly after Trump was put under arrest, his campaign released a mugshot picture of him on a t-shirt saying "not guilty".

This is for the first time that a former US president has been under arrest and arranged for criminal charges.

Trump pleaded not guilty to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records. He entered



Former US President Donald Trump sits at the defense table with his legal team in a Manhattan court in New York on Tuesday. AP

the plea during a brief arraignment in a lower Manhattan courtroom as prosecutors unsealed a grand jury indictment.

The charges stem from a

hush money payment to a porn actor during Trump's 2016 campaign. A stone-faced Trump entered the courtroom shortly before 2.30 pm (12 am IST) without saying anything.

CAPSULE

INDIA CRITICISES OIC FOR ITS 'ANTI-INDIA' AGENDA

New Delhi: India on Tuesday slammed the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for its "communal mindset" and "anti-India" agenda.

MAN LIVE-STREAMS SUICIDE ON FACEBOOK

Nagpur: A 27-year-old man from Maharashtra's Nagpur hanged himself while live-streaming the act on Facebook for almost 40 minutes in the early hours of Tuesday, police said.

EU SLAMS CHINA FOR BACKING RUSSIA IN WAR

Brussels: The European Union's foreign policy chief on Tuesday lashed out at China for its support of Russia amid the invasion of Ukraine, and called it "a blatant violation" of Beijing's United Nations commitments.

7 killed in Sikkim avalanche

PTI ■ GANGTOK

Seven tourists were killed as a massive avalanche hit east Sikkim's Nathu La area on Tuesday morning, burying their vehicles under the snow.

The avalanche hit the arterial Jawaharlal Nehru Marg, which connects State capital Gangtok to Nathu La at the China border, around 11.30 am, trapping five-six vehicles with around 30 people under the snow, the Army said in a statement.

Seven bodies were brought out of the snow and 23 people were rescued alive, including six tourists from a deep valley, a State Government official said, quoting reports from the Army.

Those injured were admitted to different hospitals in Gangtok, around 55 km away, he said.

Among those dead are a woman and a child, he added. The search operation was called off in the evening due to



Rescue operations underway after an avalanche at Nathu La on Tuesday. PTI

inclement weather, another official said. Condoling the deaths, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he hopes the injured recover soon.

"Distressed by the avalanche in Sikkim. Condolences to those who

have lost their loved ones. I hope the injured recover soon. Rescue ops are underway and all possible assistance is being provided to those affected," Modi said in a tweet by his office.

Union Home Minister

Amit Shah said the Centre was closely monitoring the situation. "My sincerest condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives in the tragic avalanche in Sikkim. We are closely monitoring the situation and the teams of NDRF will reach the affected area soon. I pray for the speedy recovery of those injured," he tweeted.

Nathu La, situated at 14,450 feet above sea level, is one of the three open trading border posts between India and China. It is a major tourist destination because of its scenic beauty, and is a part of the centuries-old silk route. Several permits are required to visit the area. The tourists were not permitted to travel beyond Milestone 13 due to inclement weather, but they forced the tour operators and the drivers to take them to the area — between Milestones 13 and 17 — where the avalanche struck, a police officer said.

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Ready to boost ties with India, reiterates China

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/BEIJING

Even as relations between the two countries are strained due to tension on the border for the last more than two years, China has said it is ready to boost ties with New Delhi besides Moscow. Beijing also said the three countries are "major emerging countries with notable influence".

This assertion was made by Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning on Tuesday. She said India, Russia and China are emerging "major powers" with notable influence and Beijing was ready to boost ties with Moscow and New Delhi.

She made this claim while responding to TASS Agency's question about Russia's new foreign policy concept. "China, Russia and India are all major emerging major countries with notable influence. As the international and regional landscape is facing profound and complex changes, we are ready



to strengthen communication with the international community, including Russia and India, and send a positive signal to the world about defending true multilateralism and jointly responding to global challenges," according to the Spokesperson of Chinese Embassy in India, Wang Xiaojian's tweet.

She further said, "China and Russia are dedicated to growing a new type of major-country relations featuring mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation. The bilateral relationship does not target and is not affected by any third party."

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Empowering Muslim women Modi Govt's priority, asserts BJP

PIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP, which is campaigning across the country to connect with the minority communities, especially the Muslim community, has claimed the safety and empowerment of Muslim women is the priority for the Narendra Modi-led Central Government.

In an attempt to convey the message that the Government has done a big and historic work of providing equal rights and security to the Muslim women by declaring triple talaq illegal through Parliament, the saffron party on Tuesday took

to its Twitter account depicting the entire sequence of events declaring the practice as illegal.

The video depicts the reactions of Muslim women along with the passing of the motion in the Rajya Sabha to declare triple talaq as illegal and the speech delivered by the Prime Minister from the ramparts of the Red Fort.

Claiming to have empowered and protected Muslim women, the BJP wrote in a second tweet: "Triple Talaq law empowers and protects Muslim women!" The Triple Talaq Bill was passed in Parliament on July 30, 2019 making it illegal.



Disaster impact spills over, needs integrated response, says Modi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday underlined the need for an integrated response to disasters, saying disaster in one region can have a big impact on a completely different region in a closely connected world.

In his video address at the fifth International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure 2023, he noted that 40 countries have become part of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) in a few years.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also delivered a video message.

The conference has become an important platform



for advanced and developing economies, large and small countries, and the global north and global south to come together on one platform, Modi said.

He said infrastructure is not merely about returns, but also about reach and resilience. Infrastructure should leave

none behind and serve people, including in times of crisis, he added, stressing on having a holistic view of infrastructure.

Social and digital infrastructure is as important as transport infrastructure, he said. "Resilient and Inclusive Infrastructure" is the theme of this year's conference.

Recent disasters are a reminder of the scale of challenges facing the world, Modi said while noting the incidents of heat wave which had hit India and Europe, cyclones and also recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

The CDRI arose from a global vision that in a closely connected world, the impact of disasters will not just be local, he said.

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Covid cases in Delhi 7-month high; virus kills four in Maha

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The daily Covid-19 cases in Delhi raised to 521, the highest single-day rise since August 27 last year, according to data shared by the city health department. The positivity rate stood at 15.64 per cent. The health bulletin also mentioned that the primary cause of the death was not coronavirus and its finding was incidental. City's Covid-19 death toll now stood at 26,533.

Maharashtra recorded 711 new Covid cases on Tuesday, a jump of nearly 186 per cent in a day, with 218 of these from its capital Mumbai. Four people have died in the State of the contagious infection in the last 24 hours.

Detailed report on P2

HC, MHA seek Bengal Govt report on Ram Navami riots

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Calcutta High Court on Tuesday directed the West Bengal Government to file a report on fresh clashes in Rishra in Hooghly district after lawyers representing senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari mentioned the matter before a division bench. Also, the Union Home Ministry on Tuesday sought a detailed report from the State Government on the violence during Ram Navami in Howrah, said officials.

Meanwhile, Union Minister Anurag Thakur on Tuesday launched a fresh attack on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her



Bihar counterpart Nitish Kumar over incidents of violence. After being criticised by the BJP over "failing to control violence", Mamata accused the BJP of organising violence during Ram Navami processions and asserted that she would not let any rioter go scot-free and warned that strict

action would be taken against "dangabaz" (rioters).

Addressing a rally in Purba Medinipur district, Mamata also took a dig at Union Home Minister Amit Shah without naming him and pointed out that BJP had said if it comes to power in Bihar, it would hang rioters "upside down" and wondered why such action was not being taken against "their goondas".

Clashes and instances of fire-bombing were reported from towns in the industrial belt of Hooghly and Howrah districts related to Ram Navami processions over the last few days, including last night.

Continued on Page 2

Delhiites to get power subsidy for year more

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhiites will continue to get free electricity on monthly consumption of 200 units after the Delhi Cabinet in its meeting on Tuesday approved extending the power subsidy scheme for next one year.

Those using 200-400 units will get a 50 per cent subsidy. Interacting with reporters at a Press meet, Power Minister Atishi said the scheme was extended despite "conspiracies" to stop it. Applications received for power subsidy from October till now will be considered valid till April 2024, said the Minister.

"The decision comes despite efforts by the BJP and the Lieutenant Governor to stop the scheme," said the Minister, who had earlier claimed that attempts were being made to stop free electricity provided by the Kejriwal Government to the farmers and lawyers. In the wake of her allegations, the BJP had accused her of lying that farmers were getting free power supply and claimed they were receiving bills of thousands of rupees due to fixed charges.

In a statement, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal thanked the people of Delhi for their support and assured them that as long as he is there, they will face "no problems".

The free electricity scheme was introduced by the Kejriwal Government in 2019.

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In a first op abroad, Delhi Police nabs boxer-gangster

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In what could be termed as one of the biggest achievements of the Delhi Police, Deepak Pahal, alias Boxer, 27, a national-level boxing champion-turned-gangster wanted in over 10 cases including murder and extortion, was arrested in Mexico by the Delhi Police Special Cell with the help of the Mexican local authorities and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

This is the first time when the Delhi Police went abroad to catch a gangster.

Boxer was trying to enter the US illegally via Mexico and planning to run his organised crime gang in Delhi and neigh-



bouring States from there. The gangster, who carried a cash reward of ₹3 lakh, is being brought to Delhi from Mexico. He has already reached Turkey and is expected to land in Delhi early on Wednesday, police said.

Boxer was wanted in a murder case of one Amit Gupta, a Delhi-based builder in the Civil Lines area of North Delhi. Soon after the incident he fled to Mexico. In a Facebook post, Boxer claimed that Gupta was murdered for his association with the rival Tilla Tajpuria gang.

Boxer, a resident of Gannaur in Haryana's Sonapat district, came to limelight when he freed Gogi gang leader Jitendra Mann, alias Gogi, from police custody in Haryana seven years ago. Later after Gogi was killed in the Rohini Courts complex by two men in September 2021, Boxer became the head of the Gogi gang.

Continued on Page 2

Covid-19 cases in Delhi 7 mnth high; 4 die in Maha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

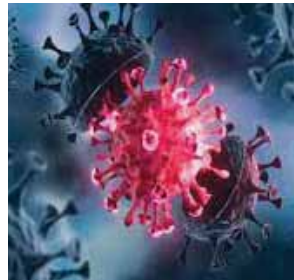
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With the fresh cases, Delhi's Covid tally has increased to 20,11,555. The data showed that 3,331 Covid tests were conducted on Monday.

Delhi has witnessed an increase in the number of fresh Covid cases over the last few days amid a sharp rise in the figure of H3N2 influenza cases in the country.



The Delhi Government is keeping an eye on the spurt in Covid cases in the national capital and is "prepared to face any eventuality", Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said on Friday.

Addressing reporters after chairing a review meeting on the Covid situation, Kejriwal had said there was no need to worry for now and that the city government was taking all required steps.

Delhi recorded 293 fresh cases on Monday with the positivity rate rising to 18.53 per cent, which meant nearly one out of every five people tested turned out to be positive.

Delhi saw 429 Covid cases on Sunday, with a positivity rate of 16.09 per cent, and one death. It logged 416 cases on Saturday with a positivity rate

of 14.37 per cent.

The city recorded 295 coronavirus cases on Thursday with a positivity rate of 12.48 per cent. On Wednesday, the national capital logged 300 cases and two deaths, while the positivity rate was 13.89 per cent.

The number of fresh cases had seen a decline in the last few months in Delhi, and it had dropped to zero on January 16, the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic.

In Maharashtra, with new additions, the state's Covid-19 tally has gone up to 81,46,301 and the death toll to 1,48,449. Maharashtra is now left with 3,532 active cases, it said. The state had logged 248 Covid-19 cases and one fatality a day before.

Of the four fatalities, two deaths were reported in Satara and one each in Pimpri-Chinchwad city and Ratnagiri district. The Covid-19 fatality rate in the state is 1.82 per cent, as per the health department bulletin. A total of 447 patients recovered from coronavirus infection in the state in the last 24 hours, taking the overall count of recoveries to 79,94,060.

G20: 2nd Tourism Working Group meeting concludes

With talks on skill development, jobs for locals

PTI ■ SILIGURI



The meeting of the second Tourism Working Group held under India's G20 presidency concluded here with discussions on green tourism, skill development, and creating livelihood opportunities for local communities in the tourism sector.

The meeting, being held in Darjeeling and Siliguri in West Bengal from April 1 to 3, is being attended by more than 130 participants, including delegates of G20 members, invitee countries, international organisations, industry partners, state tourism officials, and local tour operators.

The working group meeting was preceded by a side event on April 1 on the theme 'Adventure Tourism as a vehicle for achieving Sustainable Development Goals.'

At the panel discussion panellists held discussions highlighting the best practices, success stories, prospects, and

issues in the field of Adventure tourism. The panel discussion was attended by representatives from the United Kingdom, Mexico, Canada, Germany, Japan, and Brazil.

Among other topics, discussions were held on promoting adventure tourism and presentations on global and Indian scenarios of adventure tourism were given.

Giving opening remarks at the meeting, Tourism minister G Kishan Reddy said the vision of the conference is to project domestic tourism in mission mode.

"It will also make India maximise its potential in the tourism sector," he said.

"The Union Ministry of Tourism has also formulated a comprehensive tourism policy with holistic flavour for a sustainable and responsible growth of the tourism sector in the country," he stated.

The delegates also visited the tea estates and participated in the moonlight tea leaf plucking and tea tasting.

A delegate from Germany said several hours of discussions were held and now time is to see the hard work getting translated on ground.

"A lot of discussion was held on Green tourism, skill development and livelihood opportunities for local communities which is important for all of us," the delegate told PTI, after coming out from the closed door meeting. He said a roadmap was laid for the next meet in Goa.

Another delegate said her main takeaway from the meeting was how MSMEs can play an important role and what can different countries learn from it.

Another delegate told PTI discussions were also held on how to overcome the impact of Covid and the practices followed by different countries to tackle it.

Welcoming the delegates to Siliguri, Union Minister of State for Minority Affairs John Barla said West Bengal is the land from where India got its national anthem.

Police avert mob attack on sadhus in mistaken identity as child-lifters

PTI ■ PALGHAR

Police in Maharashtra's Palghar district averted potential mob violence against two 'sadhus' (ascetics) in a village after the residents mistook them as child lifters, nearly three years after three persons were lynched in the district over similar suspicion, an official said on Tuesday.

Rural Superintendent of Police Balasaheb Patil said two men were spotted at Chandranagar village, within the limits of Vangaon police station, around 11.30 am on Sunday. A crowd gathered in no time after some villagers suspected the duo to be child lifters, said the official.

Fearing that the crowd might become aggressive, one of the villagers alerted the police ensuring timely intervention, he said.

The official said police rushed to the spot, pacified the villagers and took the two sadhus, one in a saffron robe and another in white, to the police station. The duo said they were from Yavatmal district and went from village to village to seek alms.

Police said the tension was



diffused on time due to their 'Jan Samvad' initiative that they had launched after the lynching at Gadchinchale village in the district in April 2020.

Under the initiative, policemen visit villages and interact with the locals to build trust and improve coordination, the official said.

"We have also deployed a policeman in each of the villages who interacts with the locals and solves a lot of their problems on the spot. Some matters are referred to the higher-up," said the official.

"It was due to our Jan Samvad initiative, we were alerted on time and the unpleasant situation was averted. We do not want a repetition of the Gadchinchale incident," he added.

One in six people experiences infertility across globe: WHO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Around 17.5 per cent of the global adult population — roughly one in six people — experience infertility, showing the urgent need to increase access to affordable, high-quality fertility care for those in need, a WHO report has said.

The new estimates show limited variation in the prevalence of infertility between regions. The rates are comparable for high-, middle- and low-income countries, indicating that this is a major health challenge globally. Late marriages, stressful lifestyles, obesity, high junk food intake, smoking, alcoholism, and drug addiction contribute to the problem.

Lifetime prevalence was 17.8 per cent in high-income countries and 16.5 per cent in



low- and middle-income countries. WHO said. The WHO report — described as the "first of its kind in a decade" — includes an analysis of infertility data from 1990 through 2021. The data came from 133 previously published studies on infertility prevalence.

"The report reveals an important truth: infertility does not discriminate," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General at WHO.

Delhiites to get power...

From Page 1

Atishi said a file on power subsidy was yet not officially produced before the Delhi Government, and claimed that the power department officials said they were under "pressure" to stop the free electricity scheme.

The Power Minister said when the Cabinet note was to be readied, like every year, for the electricity subsidy scheme to be continued, the officers of the Power department were forcibly called to the LG Office, where senior leaders of the BJP were also present.

"...They all threatened the officers and got them to write a note on the files saying that the subsidy given to lawyers and farmers should be ended," Atishi said.

More than 48 lakh domestic consumers, out of more than 58 lakh, have opted for subsidy as per official figures.

Kejriwal had last year announced that subsidies will be given to only those consumers who will apply for it.

In a first op abroad, Delhi...

From Page 1

Boxer used a fake passport to leave the country. He took a flight to Mexico on January 29 from Kolkata under the alias Ravi Antil, police said.

A senior police officer said, "We received inputs in January that Deepak got made a fake passport in the name of Ravi Antil from Bareilly to flee the country. He took a flight from Kolkata to Dubai. Then from Dubai, he went to Almaty, Kazakhstan, and reached Turkey. He then headed for Spain. After taking multiple routes, he finally reached Mexico."

He was also involved in attacking police personnel at the Guru Teg Bahadur (GTB) Hospital here two years ago and helped Fajja, another wanted criminal, flee from police custody. Fajja was killed in March 2021 following an exchange of fire with police at a flat in Rohini.

HC, MHA...

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Thakur accused Nitish and Mamata of indulging in "appeasement politics" for minority votes.

Such kind of vote bank politics creates many problems and poses many challenges before the country, the Information and Broadcasting minister said while addressing an event organised here to observe the World Peace and Harmony Day on the 2,622nd birth anniversary of Jain Tirthankara Mahavir.

Parts of West Bengal and Bihar witnessed incidents of violence on Ram Navami last week.

"This is a very relevant topic in the present times. One part of the world has been witnessing a war for a long time. When I see the situation in India, there is an atmosphere of peace, but Ram Navami processions are not allowed to be taken out peacefully," Thakur said.

Referring to the violence during Ram Navami proces-

sions in West Bengal, Thakur asked whether the Chief Minister of the state is resorting to dividing the society as she said Hindus should not pass through certain areas.

Thakur said violence has no place in a civil society and the problems should be solved with dialogue and discussion.

The Minister said teachings of "Bhagwan Mahavir" holds more relevance today and called for taking them forward across the globe for the benefit of mankind.

Taking potshots at the CPI(M), Mamata alleged that "Baam" (Left) and "Ram" (BJP) have joined hands against the TMC.

"I am on the phone constantly because we don't know when and where BJP will start violence," she said, adding that people in the "processions organised by BJP" have been found carrying weapons.

Bengal Police have arrested a man from Bihar's Munger for allegedly carrying a gun during a Ram Navami proces-

sion in Howrah district last week, a senior officer said on Tuesday.

"He has been arrested from Bihar's Munger. During interrogation, the youth admitted that he carried a revolver with him during the Ram Navami procession. He was seen in the video. We have handed over him to the state CID," the officer told PTI.

The unfolding of events also saw Bengal's Governor Dr CV Ananda Bose rushing from Darjeeling to visit violence-hit areas on Tuesday. He said hooligans will not be allowed to take law into their hands.

The Centre and the State Government will work together to root out mobocracy and there will be "solid action" on the part of law enforcement agencies, he promised reporters.

Clashes were reported in Rishra on Sunday evening during a Ram Navami procession in which BJP national vice president Dilip Ghosh and party's Pursurah MLA Biman Ghosh were present. The MLA was injured and hospitalised.

Parts of nearby Serampore also witnessed incidents of vandalism following which prohibitory orders were

imposed and Internet services suspended.

Meanwhile, BJP's West Bengal president Sukanta Majumdar on Tuesday was stopped for the second consecutive day from visiting the riot-hit areas of Hooghly district by the police citing prohibitory orders.

The BJP State president who later met the Governor to appeal to him to intervene on the issue also wrote a letter to Shah in the afternoon "pointing at the worsening law and order situation in the riot-hit areas" and sought bringing in of central forces to control the situation.

Majumdar, demanded that Central forces be immediately deployed in the trouble-hit areas and an NIA probe as the "State police have completely failed to control the situation", said if he is not allowed to join the protest at Battala, he will launch a sit in on that spot.

His party colleague Adhikari, Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly similarly demanded that, "Article 355 of the constitution be invoked and central forces be deployed" in the violence affected areas of Rishra and Shibpur.

Vasundhara, Gehlot test positive for Covid-19

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his predecessor Vasundhara Raje tested positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday. Informing the public that Covid cases have increased in recent days, Gehlot said he has tested positive for the virus.

Raje said in a tweet she has isolated herself after testing positive for Covid-19. Twenty nine new cases of Covid-19 were reported in the State on Tuesday.

Gr Noida man kills wife, stuffs body in sack, throws it in Yamuna; held

PTI ■ NOIDA

A man who suspected his wife of extramarital affair was on Tuesday arrested on charges of murdering her and throwing the body tied with bricks and stuffed in a sack into the Yamuna river, police said.

The couple — Shravan and Usha — both in their mid 30s lived in the Chhatanga Khurd village in the Jewar police station area, they said.

Shravan was taken into custody. An FIR under Indian Penal Code section 302 (murder) was lodged.

Ready to boost ties with...

From Page 1

Last month, President Xi Jinping paid a successful state visit to Russia.

"The two heads of state drew a blueprint for the future course of China-Russia relations. The two sides are comprehensively following through on the important common understandings between the two leaders. We are fully confident about the future of China-Russia relations."

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the new Foreign Policy Concept last Friday, which said strengthening and deepening relations with China and India is a diplomatic pri-

ority for Russia.

The 42-page document singled out ties with China and India, stressing the importance of "the deepening of ties and coordination with friendly sovereign global centres of power and development located on the Eurasian continent".

India and Russia maintained a close strategic, military, economic, and diplomatic interaction during the Cold War. Both Russia and India refer to this alliance as being unique and privileged.

The strategic partnership between India and Russia is based on five main pillars --

politics, defence, civil nuclear energy, counter-terrorism cooperation, and space. India and Russia celebrated the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations.

According to the document, Russia will continue to build a particularly privileged strategic partnership with India with a view to enhancing and expanding cooperation in all areas on a mutually beneficial basis and place special emphasis on increasing the volume of bilateral trade, strengthening investment and technological ties, and ensuring their resistance to destructive actions of unfriendly States and their alliances.

"In order to help adapt the world order to the realities of a multipolar world, Russia intends to make it one of its priorities to enhance the capacity and international role of the interstate association of BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the RIC (Russia, India, China) and other interstate associations and international organizations, as well as mechanisms with strong Russian participation," read the document.

Disaster impact spills over, needs integrated response, says...

From Page 1

It is encouraging that apart from governments, global institutions, private sectors and domain experts are also involved in it, he said.

Along with quick relief, the Prime Minister emphasised on the need to focus on early restoration of normalcy during disasters. "Resilience is built in the times between one disaster and another. Studying past disasters and learning lessons from them is the way," he added.

Underlining the intelligent use of local knowledge for building infrastructure that can withstand disasters, he said modern technology with local insights can be great for resilience. Further, if documented well, local knowledge may become the global best practice, he added.

Noting the inclusive intent of some of the CDRI initiatives, he mentioned the Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) benefiting many island nations.

The 50 million dollar Infrastructure Resilience Accelerator Fund has generated immense interest among developing nations. "The commitment of financial resources is key to the success of initiatives," he said.

Modi asserted that India is bringing the world together this year through its ongoing G20 presidency, and said the CDRI has been included in many working groups of the elite body.

"The solutions you explore here will receive attention at the highest levels of global policy-making," he added.

According to a CDRI statement, in her address Prime Minister Hasina said, "Since origins of climate change are global, the solution and management would also have to be global. Only if the global efforts and individual countries' efforts are streamlined through responsive policy, planning and governance, the actions are likely to be successful".

She said Bangladesh was ready to join any initiative at a regional or global level dealing with the impacts of climate change. Hasina also called for coordinated global efforts and shared vision for climate adaptation mitigation and resilient infrastructure.

The two-day interactive international conference will see a gathering of over 90 global experts from more than 20 countries representing 50 global organisations, the private sector, and academia, the CDRI said.

M.P. HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

NOTICE INVITING E- TENDER (NIT No. 01-02/2023-2024)

Online percentage rate bids for the following works are invited from Registered Contractors and firms of reputed fulfilling criteria:-

S. No.	System E-Tender No.	Name of Work	PAC EMD	Cost of Form	Completion Period
01	2023_MPHID_265049	Construction of Block Public Health Unit at Community Health Center, Babai, Sohagpur, Bankhedhi, Seoni Malwa & Kesla, Distt. Narmadapuram, Timarni & Khirkhya Distt. Harda.	27717000/- 2780000/-	17700/-	12 Month
02	2023_MPHID_265053	Construction of Block Public Health Unit at Civil Hospital, Amla, at Community Health Center, Athner, Ghoradongri, Shahpur, Bhimpura, Prabhat Pattan, Sehra (Betul) & Chicholi Distt. Betul.	29916000/- 3000000/-	17700/-	12 Month

(1) Interested bidders can view the detailed NIT On Website <http://www.mptenders.gov.in> (2) The bid documents can be purchased and bid submission online as per NIT Schedule w.e.f. 05.04.2023 to 19.04.2023, 17:30 Hrs. (3) Opening of Envelope A On 20.04.2023 At 15.00 Hrs. & Envelope B On 21.04.2023 At 17.00 Hrs. (4) Amendments to NIT, If Any would be published on website only and not in newspapers.

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7 killed in...

From Page 1

Some 350 people in 80 vehicles, stranded on the road because of the snow, were brought back to Gangtok after the snow was cleared in the afternoon, officials said.

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang condoled the deaths, and said that he was praying for the speedy recovery of those injured.

"My heart goes out to the bereaved family and friends in this hour of grief and I pray that the departed souls rest in eternal peace," Tamang said.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said he was deeply distressed by the news of the avalanche and expressed grief over the loss of lives.

"My thoughts are with the victims of this terrible tragedy, and their families. Wishing all the best to the teams involved in the rescue mission," he said in a Facebook post.

Chief Minister of neighbouring West Bengal Mamata Banerjee said she was deeply pained by the tragedy.

"Owing to the avalanche, the nation has lost several precious lives. I offer my sincerest condolences to the bereaved families and pray for the speedy recovery of those who were injured. Praying for the safety and security of all," she tweeted.

The East district has been experiencing rainfall and snowfall in the higher reaches since Friday, a weather official said.

Forecasts and nowcasts on rainfall, thunderstorms and lightning have been issued, he said. In the 24 hours till 8.30 am on Tuesday, 50 mm rainfall was recorded by the Gangtok weather station, he added.

Underlining the intelligent use of local knowledge for building infrastructure that can withstand disasters, he said modern technology with local insights can be great for resilience. Further, if documented well, local knowledge may become the global best practice, he added.

Noting the inclusive intent of some of the CDRI initiatives, he mentioned the Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) benefiting many island nations.

The 50 million dollar Infrastructure Resilience Accelerator Fund has generated immense interest among developing nations. "The commitment of financial resources is key to the success of initiatives," he said.

LG nod to setting up of vigilance panel at Fair Price Shop level

VK Saxena questions delay by Govt



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing concern over a delay of eight years in the setting up of a vigilance committee at the Fair Price Shop level, Delhi Lieutenant Governor (L-G) VK Saxena has approved the formation of such a committee, aimed at ensuring transparency and effectiveness of the Public Distribution System (PDS). The proposal to this effect first mooted by the Food & Supplies Department in 2017 kept oscillating at different levels and was kept pending on one occasion at the level of the Minister (Imran Hussain) for nine months before being returned without assigning any reason.

Government ever since it came to power. "Almost every other State including Assam, UP, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Goa, Odisha, Tripura and Haryana constituted the FPS-level committees between 2016 and 2018, but Delhi could not do so till now," officials said. "The Delhi LG, while agreeing to the proposal to constitute these committees that was sent on March 27, has expressed grave concern that the proposal has inordinately taken this long," officials said.

In his note to the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Lieutenant Governor has underlined that constitution of these committees that seeks to ensure transparency in PDS which directly affects the common man, has been dealt in a very lackadaisical manner. The LG has noted that

majority of the States like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Goa, Odisha, Tripura, Haryana, Assam have constituted the Committees during the years 2016 to 2018, but, Delhi could not set up a Fair Price Shop Level Committee in the past eight years i.e even from the issue of the 'TPDS (Control) order in 2015. There has been extreme laxity in processing this proposal." He has requested the Chief Minister to advise his Ministers to ensure expeditious disposal of such important proposals relating to safeguarding the interests of general public. After much delay since 2015, the proposal to constitute these Committees was first initiated by the Food & Supplies Department in 2017 and was thereafter put up for

approval of the Minister on 08 different occasions. However, it was returned every time for one reason or the other and on a separate occasion, the Minister kept sitting on the file for more than one year before sending it back to the Department.

As per the section 29 of the National Food Security Act, which has come into force in the year 2013, vigilance committees were required to be setup at State, District, Block and FPS levels. Similarly, Clause 11 of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) (Control) order, 2015 also provides for setting up of vigilance committees for the Targeted Public Distribution System at State, District, Block and fair price shop levels as per the provisions of the Food Security Act.

The Food & Civil Supplies Department has already constituted the Vigilance Committees at State, District and Block/Circle level in the year 2014 during President's Rule, but the constitution of the FPS level Committees on the ground was pending unjustifiably ever since the AAP Government came to power in 2015.

Cabinet approves power subsidy extension, aids for divyangs, Advocates' Welfare Scheme

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Cabinet has approved several proposals including the extension of the Delhi Chief Minister Advocates' Welfare Scheme, procurement of mechanical sweepers and water sprinkling machines to control dust pollution and to extend its power subsidy scheme for one year and to provide artificial limbs and other aids to physically disabled persons through a government agency. The Sugamaya Sahayak Scheme for the divyangs aims to enhance the mobility of individuals with benchmark disabilities. Under the scheme, they will be provided aids and appliances such as smart canes, hearing aids, wheelchairs, motorised tricycles, and artificial limbs to enable them to overcome physical barriers, improve their mobility, and pursue education and employment. The social welfare department of the Delhi Government will enter a five-year agreement with a Government company to organise awareness camps and provide individuals with benchmark disabilities the necessary equipment.



Delhi Law Minister Kailash Gahlot proposed the continuation of the earlier Delhi Chief Minister Advocates' Welfare Scheme with similar conditions to provide group term insurance and group medi-claim insurance respectively to advocates registered with the Bar Council of Delhi & named in the Electoral Roll of Delhi under the Chief Minister's Advocates Welfare Scheme.

The scheme provides group term insurance and group Medi-claim coverage to lawyers practising in Delhi, offering significant financial support in unforeseen circumstances such as death or illness.

The group (term) insurance payments will be direct-

ed to the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), while payments for the medi-claim coverage will go to New India Assurance.

Addressing a press conference, Delhi ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj said the scheme for advocate welfare was introduced to provide social security to the practising advocates enrolled with the Bar Council of Delhi (and also on the Delhi voters' list) and their families.

The scheme was first announced in December 2019 and has been providing group (life) insurance of Rs. 10 lakhs per advocate and group Medi-claim coverage for the advocate, their spouse, and two dependent children up to the age of 25 years for a family

floaters sum insured of Rs. 5 lakhs. The scheme was initially applicable for one year, and the Delhi Cabinet has been further extending it since.

The Kejriwal government has spent around Rs 100 crore on the welfare of advocates under the Delhi Chief Minister Advocates' Welfare Scheme.

This includes more than Rs 32 crore for life insurance and over Rs 66 crore for medical insurance. The scheme has benefited over 4,100 lawyers and their families since December 2020, with more than 200 families receiving a claim of Rs 10 lakh each under the group life insurance policy.

The cabinet approved a proposal of the Environment department for purchasing 70 mechanical sweeping machines to remove dust on bigger roads maintained by the Public Works Department (PWD).

It also decided to purchase 250 water sprinkling machines fitted with anti-smog guns, Bharadwaj said.

A sum of Rs 2,388 crore will be spent on this in the next seven to 10 years and in the first year, the expenditure will be Rs 257 crore, he said.

1,675 DDA flats for slum dwellers almost complete

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Construction work of 1,675 flats meant to rehabilitate slum dwellers in Delhi is almost complete and these were ready to be allotted to beneficiaries from several slum clusters in the city by June. Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, also the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) Chairman, reviewed the progress of works on the ambitious in situ rehabilitation project and the adjoining world-class nursery - 'Vaishnavi' - being developed by the DDA in north Delhi's Ashok Vihar area. The project is expected to house 10,000 people in total.



A senior officer of Raj Niwas said that in line with the 'Jahan Jhuggi Wahin Makaan' scheme of the Delhi Development Authority, flats under the Jailorwala Bagh in situ rehabilitation project are equipped with all modern amenities. "During the on-site inspection of works, the LG was informed that "about 95 per cent works on the total 1,675 flats meant for rehabilitation of slum dwellers, has been completed, and remaining work will be completed by May 30, and they will be ready for allotment by June," he said. Coming after the Kalkaji in situ rehabilitation project based on the 'Jahan Jhuggi

Wahin Makaan' scheme of the DDA, "these flats will go a long way in fulfilling the Prime Minister's inclusive vision of a dignified life to the poorest of the poor," the Raj Niwas said in a statement.

Of the 1,675 flats under construction, 1093 are those where slum dwellers of Jailorwala Bagh will be rehabilitated, the remaining 582 will be allotted to people from other locations, it said. The flats

are projected to house nearly 10,000 residents.

Built along 14 floors, these flats are made of complete RCC structure and are earthquake-resistant, the statement said. "Spread over 340 sq ft, each of these flats have a bedroom, living room, kitchen, separate toilet and bathroom and a balcony. While the total residential built-up area of the project is approximately 67,000 sq m, the covered area for community facilities is nearly 1,000 sq m. It will also have a provision for parking of 337 vehicles," it added.

The LG Governor also reviewed the progress of the upcoming 'Vaishnavi' nursery-cum-park, located adjacent to these flats.

The project consolidates seven fragmented green pockets in Ashok Vihar Phase-II to develop one large park spread across approximately 33 acres. Its foundation stone was laid by

Saxena on December 29, 2022.

"The project proposes to develop an environmental asset in the form of a public park. The park will act like an integrated centre where city dwellers and tourists will be provided with a hands-on opportunity to interact with nature through connected activities of plant nursery, vermi-composting, apiculture and pottery, being exhibited at the park with a special emphasis on know-how of hydroponic farming," the official said.

The central area of the project is designed as a public park with subtle introduction to mythological tree species in the main spaces with interactive sculptures and a multi-purpose ground.

It will also have a standing restaurant which will stay open even after park's closing time. An independent approach will connect the restaurant area to the park, he said.

To promote research, DU to re-employ retd profs for 5 yrs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi University is paving the way to give professors and senior professors an extension of five years following retirement to promote research culture and re-employ research-oriented academicians, a senior varsity official said on Tuesday. At present, the retirement age of the faculty is 65 years and no extension was given to teachers.

The university has prepared a set of guidelines for the re-employment of "research-oriented academicians". The official, however, stated that the guidelines will only apply to professors teaching at the varsity departments, centres, schools, and institutions, and are not applicable to colleges of the university.

The re-employed profes-



sors will hold the positions on a contract basis, he said. The 14-point guidelines, prepared by a committee, will be presented during the upcoming meeting of the Executive Council (the highest decision-making body of the university) on April 10 for approval.

"The retirement age of academicians at the university is 65 years. However, the university wishes to bring provisions to give an extension of five years for professors. We are hopeful that the guidelines will be approved in the next meeting. This step will help in promoting a research culture and for the re-employment of

research-oriented academicians," the official said.

According to the guidelines, the application for the same should be submitted before the date of superannuation of the teacher. The application will be then placed before the screening committee for further processes.

The screening committee will have a chairperson nominated by the vice chancellor. Besides the chairperson, the panel will also have chairperson of the research council; Dean of Research; Dean of the faculty concerned; Dean of Academic Affairs; Head of the Department concerned, and Joint Registrar, as members.

The re-employed professor will not hold any administrative position and the financial power will be limited to him, the guidelines stated.

Need to give 'global-level training' to MCD schoolteachers: Atishi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

There is a need to provide "international-level training" to MCD schoolteachers so that they can impart quality education to students, Education Minister Atishi said on Tuesday.

Holding a review meeting with Delhi Mayor Shelly Oberoi, officials of Directorate of Education, MCD, and SCERT, Atishi expressed the need to prepare a roadmap for international-level training of MCD school teachers.

"To deliver quality education in Delhi, the DoE and the MCD will work in an integrated manner.

Global training of Delhi government school teachers played a vital role in Delhi's education revolution and now, there is a need to prepare a roadmap for international-level training of teachers of MCD schools as well," Atishi said.

"With the help of this training, our MCD school teachers will be able to provide quality education to the children studying in their schools," she added.

The minister directed the officials of the SCERT, or State Council of Educational Research and Training, to prepare a joint action plan for the training of teachers of schools under the DoE as well as Municipal Corporation of Delhi. She also directed the officials to hold a joint orientation of principals of schools under the two agencies.

"This will create an excellent opportunity for both to learn from the best practices of each other. This training



will not only help in the professional development of teachers from both departments but will also be an opportunity for teachers to understand the challenges that they face together," Atishi said.

During the meeting, Atishi also directed the DoE, MCD, and SCERT to form a 'joint action group' to work on the content and curriculum

development, assessment, and teacher training. "Taking inspiration from these changes, we will transform the MCD schools into finest schools and work towards that they face together," Atishi said.

"The decision of MCD and Delhi government schools working together will benefit lakhs of children in Delhi," Oberoi said.

'MCD contractual teachers' agreements renewal soon

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Education Minister Atishi on Tuesday said the AAP Government stands in solidarity with MCD contractual teachers and that their contracts will be renewed soon. Atishi and Delhi Mayor Shelly Oberoi met with the contractual teachers from MCD schools on Tuesday and addressed their concerns. They assured the teachers of streamlining the process of renewing their contracts.

"Empowering government school teachers and providing them with improved working conditions has always been the priority for Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. We stand in solidarity with MCD

contractual teachers and are working towards resolving all their issues pertaining to contract renewal," Atishi said. The education minister emphasized the need to provide a better working environment for teachers in government schools and said, "Before 2015, the renewal of guest teachers' contracts was a major issue in Delhi government schools, but since the AAP government came to power in Delhi, the contracts of contractual teachers are automatically renewed, without any applications." "Now that the Aam Aadmi Party is also in power in the MCD, education will continue to be our priority in the MCD as well," she said.

DMRC writes to MoHUA seeking clarity on provision of Sovereign Guarantee to DAMEPL

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid ongoing tussle with the Delhi Airport Metro Express Pvt Ltd (DAMEPL) over payment, Delhi Metro has written to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) Centre and Delhi Government to seek clarity on providing the Sovereign Guarantee or Subordinate debt to liquidate its liability in favour of DAMEPL against the arbitration award. In a letter dated March 28, the Delhi Metro has said that Delhi High court in its order on 17 March has directed the Centre and Delhi Government to attend to the requests of Delhi Metro, within a period of two weeks from



the date of the order, for extension of sovereign guarantee/subordinate debt, enabling the corporation to liquidate its liability under the arbitration award.

Notably, the Delhi High Court in its order on March 17, had directed Centre and Delhi government, who are 50:50 partners in the Delhi Metro, to either provide sovereign guarantee to it for raising debt

from the banks or themselves extend the subordinate debt so that the corporation could satisfy the arbitration award in favour of DAMEPL.

The Delhi Metro has requested both the governments to issue further directions in this regard as the two week period mentioned in the High Court order ends on 31 March. It is learnt that there has been no response from both the stakeholders, i.e. Centre and Delhi Government on DMRC's request.

As of date, Delhi Metro has to pay Rs 4700 crores to DAMEPL. It has so far paid Rs 2600 crores to the company. The Supreme Court had, in September 2021, upheld the Rs

7000 crores arbitration award in favour of DAMEPL. As per the Delhi HC order, if Centre and Delhi government fail to extend sovereign guarantee or subordinate debt to DMRC by 31 March, then as a next step Govt of India shall return by 31 March the funds received from DMRC after the Delhi HC order dated 10 March 2022. Upon such funds being received, DMRC was to then pay the entire remaining amount to DAMEPL forthwith.

The third step was that if step 1 & 2 fail to materialise then the accounts of Delhi Metro (as on 17 March) shall automatically stand attached and thereafter the Court would

consider further directions to Government of India and Delhi government to satisfy the Award.

On March 29, the Delhi HC while hearing DMRC's Review Petition permitted DMRC to spend funds required for "salaries, medical benefits, post retrieval benefits, security deposit on smart cards and other liabilities towards O&M expenses". Such expenses are now exempted from attachment. The Centre as well as Delhi government have filed SLPs before the Supreme Court challenging the Delhi HC order, as regards the lifting of the corporate veil of Delhi Metro. The Supreme Court will hear the matter on 10 April.

DCW chief raises concern over delay in medical checks of sexual assault survivors in Govt hosps

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) chief, Swati Maliwal, raised concerns regarding the delays in conducting medical examinations of sexual assault survivors in government hospitals in Delhi and issued recommendations to the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Delhi Government, to address the same.

In a comprehensive report, the commission pointed out that while the Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLISA) laid down the Comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for "One Stop Centre in Delhi" guidelines (henceforth referred to as the DSLISA guidelines) under which One Stop Centres (OSC) were to be set up in all hospitals so that a sur-



vivor of sexual assault is provided all support services at the OSC itself, "at present, the scheme is not being implemented properly."

Delhi is the most unsafe metropolitan city and crimes against women have risen by 15 per cent in the country. Around six rapes are reported in the capital every day, the DCW said, citing the National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) 'Crime in India' Report, 2022.

Considering the alarming number of crimes as well as the extent of trauma faced by sexual assault survivors, the sup-

port systems for them must be urgently strengthened, the commission said. It also pointed out that one-stop centres (OSC) in government hospitals are not functioning properly, leading to significant delays in conducting MLC (medico-legal case) examination, it said.

"Certain government hospitals in Delhi - Guru Gobind Singh Hospital, Swami Dayanand Hospital, Chacha Nehru Hospital, Hedgewar Hospital and Kalawati Hospital do not have a One Stop Centre. This is unacceptable as it is against the orders of the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi and DSLISA guidelines and this situation should be urgently rectified," the commission said.

The commission also observed "significant delays" in conducting MLC examination in government hospitals in

Delhi. "For instance, in some hospitals, survivors are made to wait over 6 hours for the medical examination. A survivor of sexual assault is already under tremendous mental trauma. It is a matter of great concern, if she is subjected to further harassment and made to unnecessarily wait for long hours in hospitals for the MLC procedure," it noted.

Earlier, the DCW had issued notices to the Delhi government to ascertain the reasons behind the problems faced by sexual assault survivors in government hospitals. It observed that certain hospitals like Guru Gobind Singh Hospital, Swami Dayanand Hospital and Hedgewar Hospital do not have OSCs. The DCW recommended setting up OSCs in each of these hospitals urgently.

Gautam Buddha Nagar residents consumed liquor worth ₹1.6 cr in 2022-23



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The residents of Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar consumed liquor worth Rs 1,652 crore in 2022-23, fetching the highest revenue in a financial year since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020.

The excise department in Gautam Buddha Nagar, which comprises Noida and Greater Noida, also launched a crackdown on illegal liquor during the year, seizing more than 50,000 litres of illicit alcohol and arresting 360 people.

Applications for CUET-UG see 41% rise; DU top choice

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Nearly 14 lakh applications have been received for the Common University Entrance Test-Undergraduate (CUET-UG) this year, registering a 41 per cent increase from the debut edition last year, UGC Chairman M Jagadeesh Kumar said on Tuesday.
CUET-UG remains the second largest entrance exam in the country in terms of applicants. In the debut edition of CUET-UG, 12.50 lakh students registered themselves and 9.9 lakh of them submitted their applications.
The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test Undergraduate (NEET-UG) for medical admissions is the largest entrance test in India with an average of 18 lakh reg-

istrations.
"In 2023 CUET-UG, a total of 16.85 lakh students registered (themselves). Out of 16.85 lakh, 13.995 lakh paid the application fee and submitted the application form — an increase of 4 lakh students (from last year). In 2023, there is a 41 per cent increase in the total number of students who will sit for CUET-UG," Kumar said.
The maximum number of applications for CUET-UG have been received for Delhi University, followed by Banaras Hindu University, Allahabad University, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University and Jamia Millia Islamia.
Among the applicants, the maximum are from Uttar Pradesh, followed by Delhi and Bihar.
"We have also seen an



increase in the number of participating universities. In 2022, it was 90, but in 2023 it rose to 242. This significant rise indicates that CUET-UG is becoming a popular option for admissions in undergraduate programmes," Kumar said.
There is a considerable jump in the number of applicants from Jammu and Kashmir.
"In 2022, a total of 13,021 students took CUET-UG from this region. But in 2023, this number is 82,655 representing an increase of 6.3 times," he said.

"Last year students from 59 countries submitted their applications for CUET-UG. In 2023, this number increased to 74 countries with 1,000 students spread across Europe, Asia, America, and Gulf countries," he said.
From the northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim, the number of students who will take CUET-UG has increased by 31 per cent as compared to 2022. While 59,208 students from these states took CUET-UG in 2022, it is 77,365 in 2023.
The last date for applications for CUET-UG was March 30 and the exam is scheduled to be conducted from May 21-31. In a deviation from the usual pattern, the exam will be conducted in three shifts this

year.
Of 13.99 lakh students who will sit for CUET-UG this year, 6.51 lakh are girls and 7.48 lakh boys. Last year, of the 9.90 lakh students who submitted applications for CUET-UG, 4.34 lakh were girls and 5.56 lakh boys.
There is a substantial growth in the number of submitted applications by ST category students.
"In 2022, it was 58,881. In 2023, it is 95,119, indicating a rise of 61.5 per cent. A similar increase is observed in other categories too. For SC category students, the submitted applications in 2023 are 1,40,307, an increase of 35.5 per cent compared to 2022," Kumar said.
"The number of submitted applications in 2023 for OBC-NCL (OBC-Non Creamy

Layer), General-unreserved, and EWS category students is 4,61,022; 6,42,443; and 60,611, respectively. This indicates a rise of 45.2 per cent, 39.6 per cent and 20.5 per cent in the OBC-NCL, General-unreserved and EWS category applications compared to 2022," he added.
The debut edition of the CUET-UG was conducted in July last year and was marred by glitches, prompting the National Testing Agency (NTA) to cancel the exam at multiple centres. While several students were informed about cancellation a night before the exam, many of them were turned away from centres.
The UGC chairman had then said the exam at certain centres have been cancelled following reports of "sabotage".

India, Bhutan review bilateral ties as Modi engages with King Jigme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
India and Bhutan on Tuesday reviewed the whole spectrum of their bilateral ties including issues of respective national interest during talks here between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.
When asked if the Doklam issue came up for discussion, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said India and Bhutan remained in close touch relating to security cooperation. He made this observation while briefing the media about the talks between Prime Minister Modi and King of Bhutan. He arrived here on Monday for a two-day visit at the invitation of President Droupadi Murmu.
Kwatra also said India was closely following developments that have a bearing on its national interest and would take all necessary measures to safeguard them.
King of Bhutan's visit came amid some concerns in New Delhi. China's attempts to expand influence over



Thimphu. Indian and Chinese troops were engaged in a 73-day long face-off at the Doklam plateau near Sikkim in 2017 after China tried to construct a road there and India objected. Bhutan claims Doklam to be its territory.
Certain remarks by Bhutan Prime Minister Lotay Tshering last week during a visit to Europe on the Doklam tri-junction were seen by many as the Himalayan nation cosyng up to Beijing though Bhutan maintained that there is no change in its stance on the border dispute.
Tshering reportedly told a Belgian newspaper that he hopes to complete boundary demarcation talks on disputed areas in the next "one or

Congress keeps up pressure on Centre on China, Adani issues

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Congress continued to attack the Centre on two specific subjects — China and Adani Group controversy — by taking strong objection to renaming several places in Arunachal Pradesh by China, and their leader Rahul Gandhi reiterating his demand seeking answer from the BJP ruled Centre as to who owns the Rs 20,000 crore in Adani shell companies.
Further, with only two days left for the Budget Session of the Parliament which has so far been washed completely, the grand old party has urged the other Opposition parties to sharpen its attack and stay firm during the next two days by sticking to the demand of JPC on the Adani Group financial controversy.
Sources in political parties said that the fresh controversy related to China will be taken in an out of the Parliament from Wednesday and almost all the Opposition parties have agreed to target the Centre demanding questions on huge concern on national security.
Congress charged Prime



Minister Narendra Modi's "clean chit" to China and his "eloquent silence" on Chinese actions at the border resulting in the audacity of the neighbouring country naming places of India's border State.
Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the country continues to face the consequences of Modi's "clean chit" to China. "For the third time China has dared to rename our areas in Arunachal Pradesh. April 21, 2017 -- 6 places, December 30, 2021 -- 15 places, April 3, 2023 -- 11 places. "Arunachal Pradesh is and will remain an integral part of India. After Galwan, the country is facing the consequences of Modi's clean chit to China," Kharge said in a tweet in Hindi.
Rahul alleged that, "China has snatched 2000 sq km of

land, they are changing names of places -- Prime Minister is silent, no answer! Prime Minister, why so much fear?"
India has though outrightly rejected China renaming some places in Arunachal Pradesh, asserting that the state is an integral part of India and assigning "invented" names does not alter this reality.
AICC chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said a top Chinese diplomat has recently claimed that the India-China border situation is now "stable".
"But China's provocations and transgressions continue. It has now released a third set of Chinese names for places in Arunachal Pradesh, having done so earlier in 2017 and 2021. This is the price we continue to pay for PM Modi's clean chit to China in June 2020 and his eloquent silence on Chinese actions," Ramesh said in a statement.
Rahul Gandhi who has been disqualified as Lok Sabha MP following conviction by a Surat court recently, once again attacked Prime Minister's "silence" on the Adani group shell investments and asked why is he "frightened".

Rahul counter-questions scribe; BJP slams him for 'attacking' media

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's repeat counter to a scribe as "why do you always say what BJP is saying" after he was asked for comments on the ruling party's criticism of him prompted the BJP on Tuesday to accuse Rahul of "attacking" the media "Yet, again."
Rahul was walking into the Congress headquarters here and asked by the media as what he has to say about the BJP allegation that his going to the Surat court a day before along with a number of Congressmen was a tactic to pressurize the judiciary. The Congress leader walked back to the media persons and asked, "Why do you always say what BJP is saying? Every time you say what the BJP is saying."
The BJP said that "insulting the country's backward classes and the media is Rahul Gandhi's mindset" and called him an "arrogant dynast".



"Rahul Gandhi has again attacked the fourth pillar of democracy. Insulting the country's backward classes and the media is Rahul Gandhi's mindset."
"He is following in the footsteps of his grandmother with his audacity to frequently attack the country's democratic system," BJP's chief spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Anil Baluni tweeted.
BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said, "Rahul is an arrogant dynast." At another recent occasion Rahul had accused a reporter of working for the BJP.

Delhi court allows Karti to travel to Europe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
A Delhi court has allowed Congress leader Karti Chidambaram, accused in four cases lodged by the CBI and the ED, to travel to Monaco, Spain and the UK for two weeks in April to attend a tennis tournament. Special Judge MK Nagpal permitted Chidambaram to travel to the European countries from April 9 to April 22, saying he has complied with conditions imposed on him every time he was allowed to travel abroad.
The four cases include two corruption cases related to the alleged Aircel Maxis scam and INX Media scam lodged by the CBI and two related money laundering cases registered by the ED. His father PChidambaram is the main accused in these four cases. Son



of former Finance and Home Minister Chidambaram is also facing a probe by CBI on the violation of issuing Chinese visa to companies related Vedanta Group.
Karti had told the court a tournament is going to be organised in Monaco and, in his capacity as a Director of the company named Totus Tennis Ltd, which is a co-organiser of the event, he was required to be present there. He said he also has to attend certain meetings there.

HC directs consultancy firm to pay ₹10L to Google for misusing trademark

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court has directed consultancy firm Google Enterprises Pvt Ltd and its associated entities to pay Rs 10 lakh as damages to tech-giant Google LLC for misusing its trademark. Ruling in favour of Google LLC on its lawsuit to permanently restrain the defendants from infringing its trademark, Justice Sanjeev Narula observed that the defendants used the "Google" mark without due authorisation and indulged in "deception and trickery" as they "misrepresented to the public" that they were associated with Google India and had the modus operandi to dupe them.
The court added that the plaintiff company has valid and subsisting registrations for the "Google" mark and its vari-



ations and this has been declared a well-known mark with worldwide reputation on account of its extensive use and numerous. Google LLC is surely entitled to statutory protection and grant of injunction for infringement and besides the damages of Rs 10 lakh, it is also entitled to actual costs in terms of the Commercial Courts Act and Delhi High Court (Original Side) Rules, 2018 read with IPD Rules on the basis of "bill of costs", the court thus opined.
"The present suit is accord-

ingly decreed in favour of the plaintiff... Damages of INR 10,00,000/- are awarded in favour of plaintiff, payable jointly and severally by defendants No. 1, 2 and 3 to plaintiff," the court ordered in a decision passed last month. The court also directed DoT to issue directions to all internet service providers and telecom service providers to block access to the website hosted on a domain name in violation of the "Google" mark.
The plaintiff told the court that in 2011, it learnt that a "concocted collaboration" had been announced between its "supposed India entity" and Tata Communications for a joint venture in the name of the defendant no. 2 E-Kutir Technology & Extension Management (P) Ltd, a Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO) unit.

Joint bilateral exercise SLINEX-23 to forge closer ties with Sri Lanka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
With the objective to forge more close defence ties between India and Sri Lanka, the 10th edition of Indian and Sri Lankan navies bilateral maritime exercise SLINEX-23 is scheduled at Colombo from April three to eight.
The exercise is being conducted in two phases: the Harbour Phase from 03-05 April followed by a Sea Phase from 06-08 April. Indian Navy is being represented by INS Kiltan, an indigenous Kamorta class ASW corvette and INS Savitri, an Offshore Patrol Vessel, navy officials said here on Tuesday.
The Sri Lanka Navy is being represented by SLNS Gajabahu and SLNS Sagara. Maritime Patrol Aircraft, helicopters and Special Forces



from both the sides would also participate in the exercise. The previous edition of SLINEX was conducted off Visakhapatnam in March last year.
The SLINEX aims at enhancing interoperability, improving mutual understanding and exchanging best practices while jointly undertaking multi-faceted maritime operations. Professional, cultural and sporting events, as also social exchanges are planned during the harbour phase to further bolster the bonds of friendship and camaraderie between both the navies.

Experiences from Tamil cultural event at Kashi inspired to strengthen nation's unity: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
As Gujarat is to host 'Saurashtra Tamil' cultural event at Somnath this month, the participants from Tamil Nadu in the 'Kashi-Tamil Sangamam' held in Varanasi, last year, have shared their experiences of the event with Prime Minister Narendra Modi who in turn, has said the event has inspired him to "intensify efforts" to further strengthen the nation's unity.
An event like Kashi-Tamil Sangamam is also to be hosted by the Gujarat government in Somnath in April as the 'Saurashtra-Tamil Sangamam'.
The Kashi-Tamil Sangamam hosted last year in the religious town of Kashi or Varanasi was seen as a huge success. The 10-day event saw the participation of top Ministers including Modi.
The Prime Minister had



last month suggested that more of cultural events like Kashi-Tamil Sangamam should be organized by more of states to bring about the cultural and national unity in the country.
The prime minister had last November inaugurated the 'Kashi-Tamil Sangamam' - a month-long programme in Varanasi - whose objective was to celebrate, reaffirm and rediscover the age-old links between Tamil Nadu and Kashi.
Modi has written back to the participants who shared their experiences of the Kashi

event to them and described them as flagbearers of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'.
The Prime Minister expressed his happiness that people got an opportunity to learn about Kashi's culture and its people from close quarters through this programme. Modi said the manner in which the beauty of Tamil language and the rich culture of Tamil Nadu was celebrated in Kashi was wonderful.
Making a reference to the centuries-old relations between Varanasi and Tamil Nadu, the prime minister said in the letter, "Kashi has had a long and enduring connection with the people of Tamil Nadu, who have added to the rich tapestry of culture and civilisation of the place. Kashi-Tamil Sangamam has rekindled those historic memories and reiterated how deeply connected the various regions of our country are."

'High levels of lithium consumed by moms-to-be may cause autism'

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI
Because of lithium's mood-stabilizing effects, some lithium compounds have long been used as a treatment for depression and bipolar disorders. However, a first-of-its-kind study has said that higher levels of lithium in drinking water consumed by pregnant women affects their child's neurodevelopment, in some cases developing autism spectrum disorder.
Thus, the study underscores the need for adequate disposal of lithium batteries whose demand is on rise because of spurt in usage of electronic gadgets across the world.
The study comes as the annual lithium-ion battery market in India is set to increase at a CAGR of 37.5% to



reach 132 GWh in 2030, as per the JMK Research even as its market size is estimated to reach to about 800 GWh by 2030. The Indian Government in 2022 announced new Battery Waste Management Rules, 2022, to ensure the safe disposal of hazardous battery wastes and to promote the circular economy through recycling.
The study is published in the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) Pediatrics.
"Any drinking water contaminants that may affect the developing human brain deserve intense scrutiny," said lead study author Beate Ritz, professor of neurology in the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and professor of epidemiology and environmental health at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health.

Mass loss of lake-terminating glaciers in Himalayas highly underestimated, says study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Due to the inability of satellites to track glacier changes occurring underwater in the Himalaya region, the mass loss of lake-terminating glaciers in the region has been significantly underestimated, a study published in Nature Geoscience has said. This can have critical implications for the region's future projections of glacier disappearance and water resources.
Published in Nature Geoscience, the study was conducted by an international team including researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), Graz University of Technology (Austria), the University of St. Andrews (UK), and Carnegie Mellon University (USA). The researchers found that a previous assessment underestimated the total mass

loss of lake-terminating glaciers in the greater Himalaya by 6.5%. The most significant underestimation of 10% occurred in the central Himalaya, where glacial lake growth was the most rapid. A particularly interesting case is Galong Co in this region, with a high underestimation of 65%.
This oversight was largely due to the limitations of satellite imaging in detecting underwater changes, which has led to a knowledge gap in our understanding of the full extent of glacier loss.
From 2000 to 2020, proglacial lakes in the region increased by 47% in number, 33% in area, and 42% in volume. This expansion resulted in an estimated glacier mass loss of around 2.7 Gt, equivalent to 570 million elephants, or over 1,000 times the total number of elephants in the world.

K'taka tops country in giving access to justice

4 southern States in best 5: India Justice Report 2022

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Karnataka tops the list of States and Union Territories in providing access to justice and three other southern States figure among the best five, according to the India Justice Report (IJR) 2022.

The IJR, which was released here on Tuesday, said except for Delhi and Chandigarh, no State or Union Territory spends more than one per cent of its total annual expenditure on judiciary where the vacancy of judges in High Courts stands at 30 per cent. The IJR, an initiative of the Tata Trusts launched in 2019, said as of December 2022, the country had 19 judges for every 10 lakh people and a backlog of 4.8 crore cases. The Law Commission had suggested, as early as in 1987, that there should be 50 judges for every 10 lakh people in a decade's time.

The statistics were shared in IJR which ranked States and UTs on various parameters like vacancies in judiciary, budgetary allocations, infrastructure, human resources, legal aid, condition of prisons, functioning of police and State human rights commissions.

The Tata Trusts website describes IJR as a "unique initiative" that "ranks individual Indian states in relation to their capacity to deliver access to justice". While Karnataka topped the chart among 18 large and



mid-size states having a population of over 1 crore each, it was followed by Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

The list of seven small states, having a population of less than one crore each, was headed by Sikkim, followed by Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. "The justice system as a whole remains affected by low budgets. Except for two union territories, Delhi and Chandigarh, no state spends more than 1 per cent of its total annual expenditure on the judiciary."

"Vacancy is an issue across the police, prison staff, legal aid, and judiciary. For 1.4 billion (140 crore) people, India has about 20,076 judges with about 22 per cent sanctioned posts vacant. Vacancy among high court judges is at 30 per cent.

"In the police, women are only about 11.75 per cent, despite their numbers doubling in the last decade. About 29 per cent of the officer positions are vacant. The police to population ratio is 152.8 per lakh. The international standard is 222," the report said.

It said prisons are over-occupied at over 130 per cent and more than two-thirds of the

prisoners (77.1 per cent) are awaiting the completion of investigation or trial.

The IJR said most of the states have not fully utilised funds given to them by the Centre and their own increase in spending on the police, prisons, and judiciary has not kept pace with overall increase in state expenditure.

Retired Supreme Court judge Justice Madan B Lokur said, "The third IJR shows that states are making a substantive improvement over the last two ones in terms of adding new dimensions on diversity, training, and infrastructure. Some states have dramatically improved their performance but there is a lot that needs to be done on the whole."

"So far as the police is concerned there does appear to be a shortage of women officers in police. Legal aid is doing better but still a lot of people need to be provided quality free legal aid, we need to increase the confidence that people have in our services," he said.

Maja Daruwala, Chief Editor of IJR 2022, said as a member of the comity of nations and, more importantly, as a commitment to itself, India has promised that by 2030 it will

have ensured access to justice for all and built effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

"But the official statistics brought together in the IJR this year show that we still have a long way to go. I would again urge that the provision of affordable, efficient and accessible justice services to each one of us be treated as necessary as food, education, or health."

"For this to happen more resources need to be ploughed into it, much more capacity built and much more attention paid to curing long standing deficiencies," she said.

The report said Karnataka remains the only state to have consistently met its quota for SC, ST and OBC positions, both among police officers and the constabulary.

"In the judiciary, at the subordinate/ district court level, no state met all the three quotas. Only Gujarat and Chhattisgarh met their respective SC quotas. Arunachal Pradesh, Telangana, and Uttarakhand met their respective ST quotas. Kerala, Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana met OBC quotas," it said. Regarding the share of women in key positions across the justice system, which includes police, prisons, judiciary and legal aid, the report states that one out of 10 is a woman.

"While the overall share of women in the police force is about 11.75 per cent, in the officer ranks it is still lower at 8 per cent. Only 13 per cent of high court judges and 35 per cent of subordinate court judges are women. Among prison staff, they are 13 per cent," it said.

Maha health scheme to cover K'taka villages

Amid border row Maha extends benefits to 865 hamlets in neighbouring State

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Government has issued an order extending benefits of its healthcare scheme to 865 villages in neighbouring Karnataka, amid the ongoing border dispute between the two States.

A Government Resolution (GR) to this effect was issued by Maharashtra on Tuesday.

It said people who are already beneficiaries of the Antyodaya food scheme, priority group families (under the National Food Security Act 2013) and Annapurna ration card holders can avail of healthcare benefits under the



Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Jan Arogya Yojana.

The order said 865 villages from 12 tehsils in Belagavi, Karwar, Kalburgi and Bidar have been included under the Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Jan Arogya Yojana.

The families there will get medical insurance up to Rs 1.50 lakh per year for 996 types of treatments identified by the state. It also includes 34 different types of expert consultations as well, the GR said.

The Maharashtra

Government has recognised several hospitals in the state where this scheme can be availed by the people, the order said. The border issue dates back to 1957 after the reorganisation of states on linguistic lines. Maharashtra laid claim to Belagavi, which was part of the erstwhile Bombay Presidency as it has a sizable Marathi-speaking population. It also laid claim to more than 800 Marathi-speaking villages which are currently part of the southern state. Karnataka, however, considers the demarcation done on linguistic lines as per the States Reorganisation Act and the 1967 Mahajan Commission Report as final.

War of nerves as man, tusker conflict in Idukki reaches court

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

For more than two months now, the periphery of the reserve forests in Kerala's Idukki district is witnessing a "war of nerves" between Ari Komban, a wild tusker and the local population, consisting mainly of settlers in the forest areas. The locals are tribals who have been resettled in forest areas by the Governments that ruled the State during the last six decades. One of the wild elephants, who trespassed into the settlement in search of food and water, found to his surprise that the resettlement colonies are well stocked with rice, his favorite staple food and enough drinking water. No wonder, he made the colonies his favorite 'westerling holes' as well as eateries and chose not to return to the wild west. Thus began the stand off between the beast and the locals.

Ari Komban is not the birth name of the tusker. It was the name given by the local population since the tusker raids the kitchens and local provision stores and fair price shops which are well stocked with rice. According to Devasya, a settler, the smell of the rice intoxicates the pachyderm.

The community members allege that Ari Komban had killed seven persons in the locality and had vandalized many shops and kitchens. But that remains an



allegation since the law mandates that Audi Alteram Partem (nobody should be condemned on ex parte statements). The tusker too has his band of supporters. John Peruvanthanam, ecologist and wildlife enthusiast, recounts that till 1960s, the region had 1,000 sq km dense forest and corresponding wildlife. Out of this 1,000 sq km forest, a 321 sq mile area had been designated as Cardamom Hill Reserve which was further declared as a no-go area. But the entire CHR has been chopped and destroyed under one pretext or another. The wild animals which had taken shelter in the CHR do not have anywhere to go in search of food and water. Hence they

started trespassing the settlements for survival," explained John with the help of official data.

As the frequency of Ari Komban's marauding increased, the forest officials sought the services of Dr Arun Zachariah, a veterinarian who is a sharp shooter to tranquilize the tusker and relocate him to the Forest Department's elephant camp where rogue elephants are trained in captivity. But environment lovers approached the Kerala High Court seeking restraint on "mission tranquilizer"; it has the potential to endanger the life of the tusker.

The Division Bench consisting of A K Jayasankaran Nambiar and P Gopinath ordered a stay and constituted a committee of five persons to find out the authenticity behind the claim that the region was once an exclusive habitat of the wild elephants and whether the resettlement of the tribals was the root cause of the present state of affairs. "Errors in history can be corrected later in time. We need to find whether there was a mistake and if yes, correct it," said the justices. Ari Komban along with the settlers are waiting for the court verdict while the former has reduced the frequency of his forays. In due course the dream merchants of Hollywood may come out with "The Tusker, The Locals and The Rulers".

Rioters in hiding will be brought to justice: Guj HM

PTI ■ VADODARA

Those who have fled Vadodara and gone into hiding after pelting stones at Ram Navami processions last week will be eventually traced and brought to justice, Gujarat Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi said on Tuesday. Sanghavi called the hurling of stones at the Ram Navami processions a "very serious" issue, he said the State Government is equally serious about nabbing those involved in this offence.

"Be it Eid or Diwali, these festivals are not meant to create divisions in society. Throwing stones at Ram Navami processions passing peacefully is a very serious matter and we have also taken it seriously. After coming here, I held a meeting with officials over this issue to find out why this happened and we also watched CCTV as well as media footage of these incidents," Sanghavi told reporters.

Vadodara police have said they have so far arrested more



than 35 people, including women, allegedly involved in pelting stones at two Ram Navami processions in communally sensitive areas of Fatehpura and Kumbharwada areas of Vadodara city on March 30.

"Those who have fled the city and gone into hiding after throwing stones will be eventually traced and brought to the city. We will nab each and every such person and take strict action against them," he added.

At least two persons were injured in stone pelting by a mob at Kumbharwada on Ram Navami, according to police.

Local Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Manisha Vakil was part of the procession which came under attack at Kumbharwada, they had said.

In some videos of the incident aired by news channels, people could be seen running for shelter during stone pelting, while a chariot carrying a statue of Lord Ram was also pulled away to a safer place by the devotees to save it from stones.

Some of the injured persons told reporters that miscreants hurled stones at them from the terraces of nearby structures.

Hours before that incident, stones were thrown at a Ram Navami procession, organised by the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal, in Fatehpura area.

Hindu organisations had alleged that despite knowing that similar incidents of violence had occurred in these areas in the past too, police were nowhere to be seen when the procession, taken out every year on this route, came under attack.

No breakthrough in Kerala train arson probe

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the Kerala Police, cops of Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) are probing the fire that resulted in the death of three passengers of the Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express.

Though more than 48 hours have elapsed after the bizarre incident, the police is yet to make any breakthrough in the attack on the D1 compartment of the train that saw a person spraying petrol and setting the bogey on fire. Ajith Kumar, the Additional Director General of Police who heads the SIT told reporters that couple of persons who were taken into custody have been released after questioning. A team of police officials from Kerala have rushed to NOIDA in search of Sharukh Zaifi, believed to be the person present in the compartment at the time of the mishap.

The probe is based on a carry bag seized by the police from the spot where the train came to a halt following the pulling of emergency chain by a passenger.

In a first for Jammu, Kathua's Basohli paintings get GI TAG

PNS ■ JAMMU

Basohli Paintings, a famous traditional art form from Kathua district has obtained the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. It is the first of its kind for the Jammu region.

The Directorate of Handicrafts & Handloom, Jammu, has played a significant part in the recognition and promotion of the artform. Besides this, Basohli Pashmina from district Kathua and Chikri Wood from district Rajouri are also in the pipeline for obtaining the GI tag.

The department is trying to make Basohli paintings available on e-platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, and Mesho so that Basohli paintings are available for online marketing. The availability of Basohli paintings online will be very useful for promoting them worldwide.

According to officials, the



Handicrafts department played a vital role in promoting, developing, and reviving the Basohli painting craft.

The department started a Basohli painting training center in Nagrota Preta Basohli, where 20 students receive training in Basohli painting craft. The department is working on increasing the number of Basohli painting training centers in Kathua to produce more artisans.

The Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom Jammu launched the Karkhand Scheme to revive languishing crafts, and four units of Basohli painting craft are active in Kathua.

The Land measuring 3-kanals were transferred to the Department of Handicrafts by the District Administration Kathua for the construction of the CFC (Common Facility Center), a large working plat-

form for Basohli painting artisans.

For marketing Basohli paintings, the department has showrooms in Sallan, Kathua, where they display and sell handicraft products, including Basohli paintings. The department is trying to build showrooms in Lakhampur, the entrance of J&K, to promote handicraft products. The department has also recommended individual artisans and cooperative societies of Basohli paintings to participate in fairs/exhibitions within and outside the UT for the sale of their paintings.

The GI Tagging of Basohli Paintings is a result of the collective efforts of various bodies and agencies, including the department. With the increasing number of Basohli painting training centers, the art form will thrive and generate employment opportunities for artisans.




Application are invited from general public for booking of Residential Apartments in the Affordable Housing Project proposed to be developed as per terms and conditions of the policy prescribed by the Town & Country Planning Department, Govt. of Haryana vide notification no. 27/48921 dated 19.08.2013 and amendment thereto (details available at the Dept. website, i.e., www.tcparyana.gov.in)

PROJECT DETAILS							
1. Project	Coloniser / Developer: CZAR BUILDWELL PVT. LTD.						
2. Project Approval:	License No. 128 of 2019 Building Plans No. ZP-1377/JD(RD)/2020/12792 DATED-20-07-2020						
3. HRERA No. :	04 of 2020						
4. Location:	Sector 63A, Gurugram, Haryana						
5. Provisions Project Area:	Project Area 4.98 Acres No. of Flats 636 No of Towers 4 Sale Price (on carpet area) Rs. 4200/- PSF (Additional cost of Rs. 1000/- PSF up to 100 SQFT. Balcony) 50% Open space, Lift, Community Centre, Anganwadi-cum-Creche, 2-Wheeler Parking & Car Parking as per new amendment in policy dated 04.01.2021 Memo No - PF-27(VOL-III)/2020/2-7CP/41						

APARTMENTS DETAILS								
S. No.	Unit Type	Type	Total Flats	*Carpet Area (Approx in Sq. Ft.)	*Balcony Area (Approx in Sq. Ft.)	*Sale Price (in INR) Including Carpet & Balcony Area	Booking Amount	Registration Fees Amount including GST
1	3 BHK	A	02	643.278	112.022	28,01,767.60	1,35,088.38	590.00

*Balcony area amount will not be more than 1 lakh *GST Extra over Sale Price.

PAYMENT PLAN	
1. With Application:	Booking amount i.e. 5% of the total cost of Flat
2. On Allotment:	Additional 20% of the cost of Flat
3. The balance due will be equal to the amount payable as per the construction link payment plan of the project as applicable in respect of the construction phase at the initial time. Any default payment will panel interest as provided in rule 15 of the Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority.	
Application Timelines:	(i) Application form will be filled online, for registration https://edraw.tcparyana.gov.in/tcp-dms/home (ii) Booking start from 28-03-2023 to 11-04-2023

BROAD SPECIFICATIONS OF THE APARTMENT : DRG. / LOBBY FLOORING : TILES / IPS DRG. / LOBBY WALL CEILING FINISH : TILES / IPS BEDROOMS FLOORING : TILES / IPS BEDROOM WALL CEILING FINISH : OIL BOND DISTEMPER / COLOUR WASH TOILETS WALL FINISH : TILES / COLOUR WASH TOILETS FLOORING : TILES / IPS KITCHEN FLOORING : TILES / IPS KITCHEN PLATFORM : STONE / TILES KITCHEN WALL FINISH : TILES UP TO 2 FEET HIGH ABOVE COUNTER AND OIL BOND DISTEMPER / COLOUR WASH IN BALANCE AREA FIXTURE AND FITTINGS : SINGLE BOWL STAINLESS STEEL SINK & CP FITTINGS BALCONY FLOORING : TILES / IPS WINDOW : HARDWOOD / MS Z-SECTION / FIBER /COMPOSITE DOOR FRAME / DOORS : HARDWOOD / M.S / FIBER DOOR FRAMES WITH FLUSH DOOR SHUTTER / COMPOSITE DOOR SHUTTER / FIBER DOOR SHUTTER ETC COMMON AREA FLOORING / STAIRCASE FLOORING : STONE / TILES / IPS LIFT LOBBY : STONE / TILES / IPS CHINAWARE : STANDARD FITTING ELECTRICAL : ISI MARK PRODUCTS FOR WIRING, SWITCHES AND CIRCUITS SECURITY : GATED COMPLEX

ELIGIBILITY 1. Any applicant can make only one application. **2.** Any Person can apply, however, the PMAY beneficiaries, which include their spouse or dependent children, identified by the Urban Local Bodies Department, Haryana under "Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna - Housing for all" programme shall be granted preference in the allotment. First Priority shall be given to the identified beneficiaries of the said town followed by other PMAY beneficiaries of the state of Haryana. Thereafter, for the remaining flats, Persons which include their spouse or dependent children who do not own any flat/plot in any HUDA developed colony/sector or any licenced colony in any of the urban areas in Haryana. UT of Chandigarh and NCT Delhi shall be given next Preference in allotment of flats. An applicant in a specific colony shall make only one application. Any successful applicant under this policy shall not be eligible for allotment of any other flat under this policy in any other colony. In case he/she is successful in more than one colony, he/she will have choice to retain only one flat. All such applicants shall submit an affidavit to this effect. **3.** PAN Card & Aadhar Card is mandatory & Aadhar Card will be valid only with address proof.

ALLOTMENT CRITERIA : 1. The allotment of apartments shall be done through draw of lots in the presence of Committee consisting of Deputy Commissioner or his representative (atlest of the cadre of Haryana Civil Services), Senior Town Planner (Circle Office), DTP of the concerned District and the representative of concerned colonizer. **2.** After fixation of date for draw of lots, an advertisement shall be issued by the Developer informing the applicant about the details regarding date/time & venue of the draw of lots in the same newspaper in which the original advertisement was issued. **3.** For detailed criteria and time frame to be adopted for scrutiny and allotment, the applicants may also refer to the details in the Affordable Housing Policy 2013 notified vide no. PF 27/48921 dated 19/08/2013 (Available at the Department website i.e. www.tcparyana.gov.in)

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Good signs

The economy is resilient though there are issues that need to be resolved urgently

The World Bank's assessment that India's economy would remain resilient despite some signs of moderation in growth in the second half of the last fiscal comes as a morale booster for the country's economic policy and decision makers. Even though the bank has downwardly revised its GDP forecast for the current fiscal to 6.3 percent from 6.6 percent (made in December 2022), "India is still going to be one of the fastest-growing economies in the world." The moderation is on account of sluggish consumption growth and tough external conditions. Evidently, former Reserve Bank of India governor Raghuram Rajan's fears about the slowing growth rate were exaggerated. He said last month that the third quarter FY2023 growth was "dangerously close to our old Hindu rate of growth." While it is true that the economy has slowed down in the recent past, it is also undeniable that things are not as bad as one would have expected them to be. The Covid pandemic and ensuing lockdowns had crippled the supply chains, resulting in enormous disruptions and losses; and while the economy was getting back on track, Russia's war in Ukraine brought more trouble. But the recovery seems to be happening. Auguste Tano Kouame, World Bank's Country Director in India, told a news channel that India needs to grow at 8 per cent if it wants to become an upper middle-income country by 2030 and a developed economy by 2047. Deep reforms are needed to achieve that, he added.

The good news is that a number of reforms have already been undertaken: the fiscal situation, though not ideal, is under control; GST implementation has found its groove; direct tax collection is also buoyant, the mop-up for the last fiscal exceeding even the revised estimates; infrastructure development is going on at an unprecedented pace; welfare programmes are being streamlined, with emphasis on technology adoption and elimination of non-eligible beneficiaries; and the Government is no longer afraid of the most daring of all liberalisation measures—privatisation. The World Bank has rightly underlined the weaknesses like the one in manufacturing, but there are some good signs. For instance, S&P Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index showed a three-month high in March, the index rising to 56.4 from February's 55.3. Capital goods, indicating capacity addition in the economy, also grew at 13.6 per cent in April 2022-January 2023, against a high base of 21.3 in the corresponding period in 2021-22. It would be premature to state that an industrial revolution is on the horizon, but there is a real possibility of uptick in manufacturing. There are also some real concerns; these are mainly from politics. Populism continues to lure politicians to its meretricious charms, which invariably strains the public exchequer. Then there is the issue of not enough investment pouring in. On the whole, however, the situation is not bad.

PICTALK



Tourists ride boats at the Dal Lake after rainfall, in Srinagar

Triumph of India's foreign policy



ASHOK K MEHTA

What looked like near impossibility in not too distant past is now a reality. Sri Lanka has repulsed the allure of China and is back in India's fold

Who could have dreamt that Sri Lanka where anti-India sentiment was sky-high and China (and Pakistan) ruled the roost, would come into India's fold? Who could have thought that Sri Lanka, a country that was once touted to become the Singapore of South Asia, would default on its sovereign debt? Who could have imagined that the Rajapaksa clan which handled 70 per cent of the country's wealth, were hailed as the victors of the 30-year-long war and were darlings of the south would be hounded out? Who could have conceived that six times Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe whose United National Party (UNP) won one (that too on PR) seat, would become President? In 2022 many unthinkable happened in Sri Lanka.

Twice President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, younger brother and last President, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, and party strategist and former finance minister Basil Rajapaksa, were all forced into hiding even as Gota fled the country while Basil was prevented from doing so. On 9 May 2022, Mahinda resigned following countrywide violence in which 9 persons died and 30 were wounded. Gota resigned on 15 July and Wickremesinghe was sworn in as acting President. On 20 March 2023, IMF approved USD 3 bn bailout and released USD330 mn as immediate disbursement. All three Rajapaksas along with former Governor Central Bank, Ajit Cabraal and former Finance Minister SR Attygalle have been charged by Transparency International Sr Lanka for being directly responsible for the economic crisis. Former President Chandrika Kumaratunga said the Rajapaksas and friends thought they owned the country and its assets. But Mahinda blamed foreign forces and the former government for the economic collapse.

The Rajapaksas were ousted from power by a popular people's revolution, Aragalaya, for their role in the economic meltdown. The economy slumped minus 11 per cent in 2022 and will decline minus 4 per cent in 2023. The



shortage of foreign currency was made up mainly by India (USD4bn) in three months in 2022. As inflation rose to 99 per cent, and then fell to 59 per cent, nearly 30 per cent of the population is facing food insecurity and acute shortage of cooking gas, fuel and 10 to 12 hours power outages. Things have improved after creditors, especially India, helped. Wickremesinghe, who is also Finance Minister, presented the interim and full budgets last August and November.

He is still unpopular because contrary to Aragalaya's demand, he has refused to dissolve Parliament whose term ends after two and a half years. He is backed by the Rajapaksas SLPP breakaway faction which has a majority in Parliament.

Wickremesinghe has postponed elections to 340 local bodies, due 9 March, indefinitely, SLPP fearing it will lose them and undermine their image. Rs 10 bn allotted for elections was ordered instead to be utilised to distribute free rice but the Supreme Court blocked the populist scheme. Provincial elections have not been held for four years. 12 members of SLPP including the mercurial GL Peiris, have joined the opposition SJB party as a breakaway faction of UNP. Another Aragalaya has been threatened but Wickremesinghe has vowed to use

THE INDIA-CHINA RIVALRY TOOK A DISTINCT PRO-CHINA TRAJECTORY IN 2005 AS INDIA REFUSED TO PROVIDE LETHAL ARMS WHILE CHINA (AND PAKISTAN) WERE OBLIGING

the Army. Meanwhile, Colombo suffered its worst defeat since 2009 at UNHRC Geneva during the 51/1 Resolution last October. Most of the demands were carryovers from previous resolutions. For the first time, India included issues of reconciliation and devolution calling actions taken on them by Sri Lanka inadequate and abstained from voting for the resolution. This prompted Wickremesinghe to resume dialogue with the Tamil National Alliance and pledged to implement fully, the 13th Amendment enacted in 1987.

The India-China rivalry took a distinct pro-China trajectory in 2005 as India refused to provide lethal arms while China (and Pakistan) were obliging. Further, the Rajapaksas are so deeply indebted to China for the massive and superfluous infrastructure projects in the south, especially the airport and Hambantota sea port which is on a 99-year lease to Beijing. Similarly, Colombo Port City is expected to become another white elephant. With the elimination of the Rajapaksas China, the third biggest creditor after Japan and ADB has changed its tune, dragging its feet over debt restructuring.

The Chinese naval surveillance ship Yuan Wang5 was first prevented from docking at Hambantota port after India

raised strong objections but later, it managed to force its entry.

Besides the cancellation of income tax concessions, IMF imposed conditions for the 17th bailout including the reduction of the once worshipped Army from its strength of 200,000 to 135,000 by 2024 and 100, 000 by 2030. This could never have happened during Colonel Gotabhaya's presidency. Several officers including three Generals including present CDS, Lt Gen Shavindra Silva, have been sanctioned by the UN and separately by the US with travel bans. Sri Lankans have recognised India's timely USD 4bn assistance and first responder in debt restructuring. Foreign Minister S Jaishankar said on his recent visit to Colombo that India will stand by the people of Sri Lanka at all times. India's primacy in Sri Lanka is likely to continue as Wickremesinghe has cancelled Chinese energy projects in Jaffna and finally allotted oil tanks in Trincomalee for refurbishment. Sri Lanka is becoming India's foreign policy triumph.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NOT EVERYTHING ABOUT AI IS GOOD

Sir — In the recent past, thousands of tech experts, including Elon Musk, have called for the suspension of this type of AI system, ie Artificial Intelligence, because the race to develop them was feared to be out of control. Italy's data protection authority has become the first western country to block the advanced chatbot ChatGPT, seemingly acknowledging this apprehension to some extent.

There have been concerns over the potential risks of artificial intelligence, including a huge threat to jobs and a huge increase in cybercrime if it falls into the wrong hands. There are growing serious concerns about how ChatGPT and similar chatbots can deceive and manipulate people. These AI systems need greater public scrutiny, and public officials should reintroduce control over them. That's why Italy should not be the last country that has announced to curb this advanced technology, but other countries of the world should also come forward and take similar steps.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshepur

RELIEF FOR RAHUL GANDHI

Sir — A Surat sessions court on Monday granted bail, till disposal of his appeal, in the defamation case over his remark "why all thieves share the Modi surname" and also issued notice to the complainant on Gandhi's plea for a stay on his conviction. According to legal experts, a stay on Gandhi's conviction in the case would be sufficient to restore his Lok Sabha membership. According to the Supreme Court judgement in the Lily Thomas case, a stay on the conviction is sufficient and if the sessions court stays Rahul's conviction, then the Lok Sabha secretariat could restore Gandhi's membership. The sessions court will hear Gandhi's appeal against conviction in the case on April 13.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

SUPARI TO DEFARE THE PM

Sir — PM Narendra Modi in recent election rallies claimed that some people had given out a "Supari" (contract) to defame

Race for Karnataka elections heats up



Karnataka, going to polls on May 10, has become abuzz with political activity. Congress high command released a list of 124 candidates on Saturday. It has been criticised by ticket seekers and there has been protests from the workers demanding tickets for their respective leaders in the second list. Both the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress have a lot at stake and what is to be watched out for, in particular, is how the Adani issue and Congress' former president Rahul Gandhi's conviction by a Surat court for the 'Modi-surname' remarks leading to his disqualification from the Lower House play out in the

upcoming elections. Meanwhile Rahul Gandhi has moved to the Surat court. A verbal duel between the leaders of the BJP and the grand old party is on as the former says that the latter is trying to exert undue pressure on the court while the Congress president Mallikarjun rejected it saying that it was a symbol of support and not a show of strength.

Now that the court will take decision on Rahul Gandhi's conviction, there is considerable relief in the grand old party which feels that the case is frivolous and would not hold. One thing is for sure, that congress would take up this issue in its election rallies in Karnataka to gain sympathy and win over the voters.

Notably, a couple of stalwart Congress leaders including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Bhupesh Baghel and others accompanied Mr Gandhi to the court. However, Congress leader Rajeev Shukla cleared the air that the leaders went to the court of their volition. Let one wait and watch the way this political cookie crumbles!

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

him and repeatedly said the opposition is trying to dig his grave. Is the statement in keeping with the dignity of his post he occupies? It seems under PM Narendra Modi's regime the sheen of the Prime Minister post has been lost. The choice of language was unbecoming of a PMS post. Modi talks about being Vishwaguru and having 56 inches chest but has often been called himself accused of playing the victim card. Now the question arises who in the opposition is daring enough to take Modi's "Supari"?

Instead of talking about the development and achievements of his regime, in his speeches why Modi will play the victim card and how long he will play the victim card?

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi's choice of language has driven criticism from a large number of people who promptly linked it to the ongoing controversy about his educational qualifications

and degrees. One of the netizens has tweeted that "Is this the language a leader of a country speaks given a 'Supari'". It sounds so juvenile whining now and then that somebody or the other is out to malign him, seems to be a serious case of persecution complex. Our PM talks about how the opposition showers filthy abuses on him but the same PM is silent on the Adani issue when the opposition criticizes the PM on Adani row.

For this Mallikarjun khadke has rightly said that the PM has taken Supari (in PM's language) to "pickpocket" the people. Our PM should stop playing by saying repeatedly that the opposition has taken "Supari" and the opposition is digging graves, the person who is in power cannot play the victim card frequently.

Zeeshaan | Kazipet

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Narendra Modi: The architect of new BJP

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has remoulded the BJP with his efficient leadership and dexterity, writes Ajay Singh in his latest book

For some time now, the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its unwavering performance across India, particularly making inroads to the once considered 'impregnable' terrain of southern and North-eastern states, has been a subject of as much attention and deliberations among academic and scholarly community, policy-makers as common masses. In this context, Ajay Singh's book 'The Architect of the New BJP: How Narendra Modi Transformed the Party' provides an insider's account of how Prime Minister Narendra Modi transposed his highly organized and efficient leadership acumen into the broader context of Indian Politics, thereby, transforming the party's performance and its support base. The author, while tracing the historical foundations of the party, examines both past and contemporary visions and contributions of many veterans, including Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani, as well as the myri-



ad challenges the party faced in consolidating its position in Indian politics. Through a blended research methodology consisting of extensive interviews with party workers, leaders and observers, and an analysis of instances of the different innovative experiments and display of organisational skills by PM Modi, the author traces his life journey. The author observes that since his very childhood, the predisposition of Modi to adapt and apply the learnings of his life—discipline and organisational skills—at every phase of his journey, starting from his association with RSS as a Pracharak, followed by the BJP as a General Secretary (organisation) of the Gujarat unit as well as National Level, as a Chief Minister of Gujarat to Prime Minister of India, has brought about transformational changes in the party.

In a detailed explication, the author reflects on the early experiments of Modi in building an alternate political force in the early 1990s in the states of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. In the hindsight, a couple of reasons can be considered for the continued dominance of BJP in Indian Politics: first, values of discipline and organisational skills instilled among the party workers as well as the masses under Modi's leadership have already developed deep roots, which will continue to facilitate the party's strong hold even in the future. Second, many myths about the party, which constrained the party's performance in the past, have already been dismantled with the successive victories in the 2014 and 2019 general elections, as well as states' elections, which will further enable BJP to consolidate its position in the Indian political landscape.

Undoubtedly, Modi's vision has elevated the party's image transcending caste, urban and minority rhetoric. The success and future of the BJP will depend on the sus-



MUKESH KUMAR SRIVASTAVA

tained commitment to what PM Modi calls the Mantra of Triveni, i.e. the convergence of three elements: the government's actions, work ethics, and the service of the BJP workers. The book is an interesting read for anyone with deep curiosity to understand the role of leadership in bringing tremendous transformations in BJP, which in turn changed the discourse of politics in India. The ingenuity of PM Modi's leadership quality can be aptly described, in the words of Joseph Nye, as 'contextual intelligence' - the ability of a leader to understand changing environments, discern and capitalise on trends, adapt and apply the flow of events to implement different strategies in different circumstances/ contexts. PM Modi's ability to lead, organise, mobilise and capitalise have paved the way for greater transformations at both national and global level to build a 'New Bharat' capable of shaping world politics.

(The writer is Senior Consultant Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

AND THE AWARD GOES TO... YOU

Understanding consciousness is critical for a purposeful life, writes Hingori

I have recognised that living outside the concept of Maya daily is beyond general human endeavour. I wondered how we could achieve that. I received a response in the form of the following statement: 'LIVE THE LIE, BUT BE AWARE OF THE TRUTH'.

Understanding consciousness is critical because it defines who we are and everything around us. Therefore, we need to explore consciousness deeply and try to shift our conscious awareness to other forms of life to see things from their perspective. In recognising that consciousness exists in every lifeform, one will slowly be able to accept the oneness in all living entities further realising that we are all one. It is the concept of the drop of water makes the ocean and the ocean is the drop of water. So making yourself aware of and empathetic to the perspective of all other living beings, not just other humans is the first step towards recognising the divinity in yourself. So, celebrate your growth and development, both in the physical world and your spiritual self. Go ahead and give yourself an award, because you deserve it! And who doesn't love a good awards show? Here are a few more to ponder over:

THE BEST EDITOR AWARD: This award goes to someone who can delete what is not of value, see the big picture, and make tough decisions. The best editor award recognises individuals who go above and beyond themselves. The editor is like the Marie Kondo of your life, helping you declutter and get rid of things that don't add value.



The concept of getting rid of attachments and desires that are not necessary can be found in the practice of detachment or vairagya. One must have the ability to let go of one's ego and put the greater good of the cause first. One must possess the ability to detach from one's emotions and circumvent negative self-opinion.

Limiting sensory pleasures is another concept that requires to be worked upon. The practice of Pratyahara involves withdrawing the senses from external stimuli. It helps cultivate inner peace and clarity of mind. One must be able to separate themselves from distractions and external stimuli to make objective decisions that serve their life story.

THE BEST MUSIC DIRECTOR AWARD: This award recognizes individuals who understand that the background music of one's life is one's destiny. It's like having your personal DJ or creating the perfect soundtrack for your life. Accepting life's circumstances that do not align with one's expectations can only be possible with a clear understanding of destiny. So, turn up the volume and let your destiny jam out with you.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states, "You are what your deep, driving desire is. As your desire is, so is your will. As your will is, so is your deed. As your deed is, so is your destiny." This quote emphasizes the importance of understanding one's desires and will in shaping one's actions and ultimately, one's destiny.

THE BEST PRODUCER AWARD: This award goes to someone who acts as a mentor and helps their mentee climb the ladder of life, producing a more enlightened person. Guru Vasishta is a prime example of the best producer, having evolved Ram's consciousness to the extent that he became recognised as a God. (Paradoxically so, considering Ram knew that there is no God). To qualify for the best producer award, one must be able to unveil the limitations of ignorance.

Be persistent in training, testing, correcting and re-correcting. A mentor must have the patience and perseverance to help the mentee overcome limitations and achieve full potential. This involves providing constructive feedback, challenging their mentees to push themselves beyond their limits, and helping them develop the skills and knowledge necessary for success. One must have the ability to sacrifice and put others before oneself. You are like the Yoda of their life, guiding them towards the light side of the force. And who wouldn't want a Yoda in their life?

BEST SCREENPLAY AWARD: A good screenplay for the Best Screenplay Award should have the following elements: knowledge, shedding negative samskaras, and a scriptwriter who possesses an ethereal sense of humour and knows how to laugh at himself. It's like having your own personal JK Rowling, creating a magical world that educates and enlightens you. And finally, **THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD** — goes to the exemplary volunteer. This award honours individuals who have made a selfless commitment to serve their community to make a positive impact in the lives of others.

Concluded

A long-winded road to disqualification



DEVENDER SINGH ASWAL

The process of disqualification of a lawmaker is a bit complicated but not ambiguous. The Constitution and conventions are a fair guide on the matter



A question has arisen whether a Member of Parliament convicted by a court of law and awarded imprisonment of two years or more warrants to be disqualified again by the President in terms of Article 102 read with Article 103 of the Constitution. With respect to disqualification of a Member of a State legislature, similar provisions are enshrined in Article 191 and 192. A constricted, or rather erroneous, view is gaining currency that the words used in the Constitution are 'a person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of either House of Parliament, if he incurs any of the disqualifications mentioned under Article 102(1). Further, it is being said that a matter of disqualification must be referred to the President who shall give his decision, which will be final, after obtaining the opinion of the Election Commission (EC) and in accordance with such opinion.

Such an argument is utterly flawed as it is against the spirit of the Constitution, the law, the judicial dicta and the well-established parliamentary practice. The words 'shall be disqualified' are being given a very parochial rather than a harmonious construction. It is being said that after incurring any of these disqualifications, the MP has to be disqualified again with the decision of the President. If a question arises whether a member has incurred any of the disqualifications under Article 102(1), the question shall be referred to the President who shall give his decision which shall be final in accordance with the opinion of the EC. Now, it must be noted that the words used in Article 103 are 'if any question arises' whereas Article 102(1) mentions the disqualifications.

The grounds mentioned under Article 102(1) come under three categories. First, disqualifications on the ground of 'unsoundness of mind'; 'undischarged insolvency' and loss of Indian citizenship. On these grounds, there is no recorded case so far of any member having been disqualified. But, nevertheless, it's clear from the Article that the concerned House can dis-



THE WORDS 'SHALL BE DISQUALIFIED' ARE BEING GIVEN A VERY PAROCHIAL RATHER THAN A HARMONIOUS CONSTRUCTION

(The author is a retired Additional Secretary, Lok Sabha, and a member of Delhi Bar Council. Views expressed are personal)

qualify a member once he incurs these disqualifications. Second, in case a representation is received by the President about the alleged assumption of an office of profit by a member, the representation is referred to the EC by the President for opinion. Jaya Bachchan was disqualified by the President with effect from July 14, 2004, on receipt of a petition that she was occupying an office of profit under the UP Government. Following her disqualification, there was a spate of representations including a representation against Sonia Gandhi who was chairperson of the National Advisory Council.

To avoid the possible political upheaval, the Parliament (Prevention of Disqualification) Act, 1959, was amended in 2006 retrospectively w.e.f. April 4, 1959. The result was the membership of Jaya and Sonia Gandhi was saved and similar petitions became infructuous. On the contrary, where a member is disqualified by a court of law, he stands disqualified from the date of the judgment. Shibu Soren was disqualified by the apex court in 2001 on the grounds of holding an office of profit. He was a member of Rajya Sabha and following the verdict of the court, he stood disqualified and the Rajya Sabha Secretariat issued a notification to that effect.

Once disqualified by a court, there is no question or propriety to refer the matter to the EC as the question of disqualification stands settled by judicial dicta. Thirdly, the Speaker can disqualify a member under the Tenth Schedule on grounds of defection. The decision of the Speaker is final under the Tenth Schedule subject of course to judicial review. An allegation of defection is not referred to the President or the EC.

There is yet another category when a member can be expelled by the House without reference to any outside body or authority. Article 101 in respect of Parliament and Article 190 in respect of State Legislature provide that in case a member remains absent from the House continuously for a period of 60 days without the approval of the House, his seat may be declared vacant. The motion for such removal is usually moved by the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs which once approved by the House, the seat is declared vacant.

Three members of Provisional Parliament in April 1950, a member of Lok Sabha (SN Mahapatra) in 1956, and a member of Rajya Sabha (Baljinder Singh Hamdard) in December 2000 were expelled under Article 101(4).

A member can also be expelled by the House for unbecoming conduct. HG Mudgal in 1951 and 10 members of Lok Sabha and one member of Rajya Sabha in 2005 were expelled by the respective Houses for 'cash for query', that was deemed unbecoming conduct of a legislature.

The expulsions were upheld by the apex court in *Raja Ram Pal vs Speaker Lok Sabha* (2007). None of these cases were referred to the President for approving the expulsions since the legislature itself is competent to do so. Under section 10A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, an elected member can be disqualified by the EC for failure to lodge an account of election expenses. A member of Rajya Sabha was disqualified by the EC in July 1991 and the Rajya Sabha Secretariat issued the notification of disqualification. The matter was not referred to the President.

In terms of Article 102(1)(e), apart from the anti-defection law

which is adjudicated by the Speaker/Presiding Officer, a member can be disqualified by or under any law by a court of law. The legal position after the judgment of the apex court in the *Lily Thomas case* (2013) is that a conviction which carries a sentence of two years or more will automatically result in disqualification since the apex court also struck down section 8(4) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, being unconstitutional. The earliest case is of *Rasheed Masood* who lost his membership of Rajya Sabha due to conviction in a corruption case in 2013. *Lalu Prasad* and *Jagdish Sharma* too were unseated from the Lok Sabha following their conviction and sentence of imprisonment which were for more than two years.

There was no reference by either House to the President or the EC since they had been disqualified by the Court. The Lok Sabha Secretariat issued a notification informing the stakeholders including the EC about the vacancy caused due to such disqualification. So, the House cannot defer the date of disqualification of a member disqualified by the Court. Once the question of disqualification is judicially settled, a legislature cannot delay or stall the same, except by enacting a new law or by amending the extant act.

The secretariat only issues notification about the vacancy so that the EC takes recourse to fill the vacancy thus caused. However, disqualification of a member would be untenable if the conviction is stayed as reiterated by the Appellate Court in the *Lok Prahari case*, 2018. It is therefore incumbent upon the legislature Secretariat to reinstate the membership with equal speed and alacrity once the decision of conviction is stayed by an Appellate Court.

In Karnataka parties are offering freebies to voters

All eyes are on the Karnataka Assembly elections, for which polling will be held on May 10 and the results will be announced on May 13

The outcome will determine the prospects of the two leading contenders, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress, ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and other stakeholders like the JD(S). In a neck-and-neck fight, most opinion polls indicate that the Congress has the edge over the BJP. Intelligence sources have also projected 80 to 90 for BJP, 90 to 100 for the Congress, and 30 to 40 for the JD(S). Karnataka faces a three-cornered contest between the Congress, BJP and the Janata Dal (S).

Stakes are high but more so for the BJP and the Congress. The new entrant Aam Aadmi Party is also contesting all the seats. Winning Karnataka would indicate the crucial Congress revival. It will give a



KALYANI SHANKAR

(The writer is a senior journalist. Views expressed are personal)

moral boost to the party, which currently rules in only three states—Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and Chattisgarh.

A defeat would be a setback to the ruling BJP which has been on a winning spree, even in the three Northeastern states polls last month. Karnataka is the only BJP-ruled State in the south.

Former prime minister Deve Gowda and his son, former CM Kumaraswamy, are battling to retain their JD(S) supremacy in the old Mysuru region and their kingmaker role. It will not be a walkover for either national party as they face intense factionalism and indiscipline. The BJP is solely dependent on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's magic. The Prime Minister has visited the

State several times, inaugurating various schemes and addressing Poll rallies.

The BJP is looking to the support of octogenarian former chief minister Yeddyurappa. The Lingayat strongman can sabotage the BJP's chances in the highly caste-ridden politics. The BJP got its first chief minister in the south when Yeddyurappa won the state in 2008. Unable to sideline him, the BJP has made him a Parliamentary board member after he was asked to pave for Basavaraj Bommai last year.

The BJP faces three challenges—anti-incumbency, corruption and lack of a chief ministerial face. The BJP is defensive on anti-incumbency. Karnataka has never elected the same party consecutively in



Assembly elections for more than two decades. Secondly, it has never given a majority to the same party in consecutive Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

In the caste arithmetic, Vokkaligas constitute 15 per cent, OBCs 35 per cent, SC/STs 18 per cent, Muslims 12.92 per cent, and Brahmins about 3 per cent. Vokkaliga votes will be divided between JDS, Congress, BJP, and others.

Lingayats (15 per cent) dominate as many as 100 of 224 constituencies. Until 1989, they supported the Congress.

However, they moved away after the sacking of the then chief minister Veerendra Patil by Rajiv Gandhi. The Congress's strategy is to woo specific interest groups like women. It mobilizes support from Kuruba, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Muslim, and OBC communities.

Secondly, Congress's vote share has never been below 26 per cent votes in the State. Even in 2018, the Congress's vote share stood at 38.04 per cent. Thirdly, Congress has made an aggressive and defiant move with Rahul Gandhi planning to launch his Karnataka campaign with the April 5 rally in Kolar. His Bharat Jodo Yatra and the recent court verdict resulting in dismissal from Parliament

have increased his acceptance.

As for the BJP, the Bommai Government has increased quotas for SC and ST by 4 and 2 per cent. The Lingayats and Vokkaligas also got a 2 per cent hike each. The Bommai Government has announced up to Rs 3,000 per month for families below the poverty line. It has offered Rs 1,000 per month for female farm workers, free bus passes to 30 lakh women in the organised sector, and 8 lakh girl students.

On the negative side, the BJP is defensive on the poll issues like inflation, farmer problems, and unemployment. Real estate, sand, and mining mafias also need to be fixed. The Bommai Government is allegedly known as a 40 per cent commission sarkar.

Parties are showering free-

bies on the voter. As per the recent trend, money is not a consideration, as all the parties are willing to spend vast amounts. The Congress has already guaranteed 4 things. They are—10 kg foodgrains, 200 units of power, Rs 2,000 for every woman family head, and Rs 3,000 for graduates.

The new entrant AAP has announced free electricity, free water, agricultural loan waiver, unemployment insurance @ Rs 3,000, and free bus pass for women in urban areas. With the parties desperately trying to woo voters with political promises, new schemes, and gifts, the big question is how much the voter would get swayed by them. The voter has a mind and could still prefer the BJP to prove the pundits wrong.

In blow to Russia, Finland joins NATO for Ukraine war

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Finland joined the NATO military alliance Tuesday, dealing a major blow to Russia with a historic realignment of the continent triggered by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. The Nordic country's membership doubles Russia's border with the world's biggest security alliance and represents a major change in Europe's security landscape: The nation adopted neutrality after its defeat by the Soviets in World War II. But its leaders signalled they wanted to join the alliance just months after Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine sent a shiver of fear through Moscow's neighbours. The move is a strategic and political blow to Putin, who has long complained about NATO's expansion toward Russia and partly used that as a justification for the invasion.

Russia warned that it would be forced to take "retaliatory measures" to address what it called security threats created by Finland's membership. It had also warned it would bolster forces near Finland if NATO sends any additional troops or equipment to what is its 31st member country.

The alliance says it poses no threat to Moscow.

Neighbouring Sweden, which has avoided military alliances for more than 200 years, has also applied. But objections from NATO members Turkey and Hungary have delayed the process.

Alarmed by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine last year, Finland, which shares a 1,340 kilometre (832 mile) border with Russia, applied to join in May, setting aside years of military non-alignment to seek protection under the organisation's security umbrella. "I'm tempted to say this is maybe the one thing that we can thank Mr. Putin for because he once again here precipitated something he claims to want to prevent by Russia's aggression, causing many countries to believe that they have to do more to look out for their own defence and to make

Finland parliament website targeted ahead of NATO entry

Helsinki (AP): Finland's parliamentary website was paralysed by a denial-of-service attack on Tuesday, just before the country made its historic entry into NATO, a move that more than doubles NATO's border with Russia and has angered Russian President Vladimir Putin. The attacks — in which participants flood targets with junk data — made the parliament's site hard to use, with many pages not loading and some functions not available for a time.

A pro-Russian hacker group known as NoName057 (16) claimed responsibility, saying the attack was retaliation for Finland joining NATO. The hacker group, which has reportedly acted on Moscow's orders, has taken part in a slew of

cyberattacks on the US and its allies in the past. The claim could not be immediately verified. For the most part, Finns went about their business as usual on the bright cold day, belying the historic nature of Finland becoming the 31st member of NATO. Its membership was formalised with a series of steps in Brussels.

It's a moment that most Finns had never previously wanted as they balanced friendly ties with both the West and Russia. But all that changed with Russia's full-scale and brutal invasion of its neighbour Ukraine last year, creating a sudden and strong sense of insecurity that pushed the nation toward membership in the security alliance.

sure that they can deter possible Russian aggression going forward," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said just before accepting the documents that made Finland's membership official.

The US State Department is the repository of NATO texts concerning membership. Earlier, Russia's Foreign Ministry said the country "will be forced to take military-technical and other retaliatory measures to counter the threats to our national security arising from Finland's accession to NATO."

It said Finland's move marks "a fundamental change in the situation in Northern Europe, which had previously been one of the most stable regions in the world."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, meanwhile, Tuesday said Finland's membership reflects the alliance's anti-Russian course and warned that Moscow will respond depending on what weapons NATO allies place there. But Peskov also sought to play down the impact, noting that Russia has no territorial

disputes with Finland. It's not clear what additional military resources Russia could send to the Finnish border. Moscow has deployed the bulk of its most capable military units to Ukraine.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg earlier said that no more troops would be sent to Finland unless it asked for help. "There will be no NATO troops in Finland without the consent of Finland," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters at the alliance's headquarters in Brussels a few hours before the country joins.

The country is now protected by what Stoltenberg called NATO's "iron-clad security guarantee," under which all member countries vow to come to the defence of any ally that comes under attack.

But Stoltenberg refused to rule out the possibility of holding more military exercises there and said that NATO would not allow Russia's demands to dictate the organisation's decisions. "We are constantly assessing our posture, our presence.

'US providing Ukraine \$2.6 bn in military aid'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US will send Ukraine about \$500 million in ammunition and equipment and will spend more than \$2 billion to buy an array of munitions, radar and other weapons in the future, U.S. officials said, as the Ukrainian troops prepare for a spring offensive against Russian forces.

The ammunition rounds, along with grenade launchers and vehicles, will be taken from military stockpiles so they can be in the war zone quickly, the officials said.

The \$2.1 billion in longer-term aid, which is being provided under the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, will buy missiles for the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System, or NASAMS, as well as radar and other weapons, according to the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the aid had not yet been announced. An announcement is expected as soon as Tuesday.

The new weapons and funding come as Russia has continued to bombard Ukraine with long-range missiles and the hotly contested battle for the eastern city of Bakhmut drags on. Ukrainian

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told The Associated Press in an exclusive interview that unless his country wins that fight, Russia could begin building international support for a deal that could require Ukraine to make unacceptable compromises. Zelenskyy said if Moscow's forces take Bakhmut, then Russian President Vladimir Putin would "sell this victory to the West, to his society, to China, to Iran." The latest U.S. package, with its mix of short-term and long-term aid, includes a wide variety of ammunition from Pentagon stocks, 23 million rounds of small arms ammunition and 200,000 grenades, as well as funding for more high-tech weapons, including counter drone rocket systems, air surveillance radar and satellite communications terminals and services.

It brings the total amount of U.S. security assistance to Ukraine to more than \$35 billion since Russia invaded in February 2022. Defense leaders testifying in Capitol Hill last week said the U.S. is prepared to support Ukraine for as long as needed. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg echoed that sentiment on Monday, as the alliance's foreign ministers were preparing to meet in Brussels.

Suspect in attack that killed military blogger to face court

St Petersburg (AP): A woman suspected of involvement in a bombing at a St. Petersburg cafe that killed a Russian military blogger is set to face a court hearing in the Russian capital Tuesday that will set terms for her pre-trial detention.

Vladlen Tatarsky, 40, an ardent supporter of the war in Ukraine who filed daily reports on the fighting from the front lines, was killed Sunday as he led a discussion at the riverside cafe in the historic heart of St. Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city.

Russian authorities described the bombing as an act of terrorism and blamed Ukrainian intelligence agencies for orchestrating the attack. Police arrested 26-year-old St. Petersburg resident Darya Trepova, who was seen on video moments before the blast presenting Tatarsky with a statuette that is believed to have contained explosives.

The Interior Ministry released a video in which Trepova told a police officer that she brought the bust to the cafe. When asked who gave it



to her, she said she would explain later. The circumstances under which Trepova spoke were unclear, including whether she was under duress. The National Anti-Terrorist Committee, which coordinates counterterrorism operations, said the bombing was "planned by Ukrainian special services," noting Trepova was an "active supporter" of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Last year, Trepova was arrested and spent 10 days in custody after taking part in an anti-war rally. Ukrainian authorities did not

directly respond to the accusation, but President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in reference to the attack that he doesn't think about events in Russia, and his top adviser described the bombing as part of Russia's internal turmoil. While Trepova was arrested in St. Petersburg, her case was sent to Moscow, where the headquarters of the country's top investigative agencies are located, in an apparent reflection of its high priority.

Trepova will face a hearing Tuesday at Moscow's Basmanny District Court that is expected to order her to be held in custody pending the investigation. Russian law envisions a life sentence for terrorist crimes.

According to Russian media reports, Trepova told investigators she was asked to deliver the bust, but didn't know what was inside it. The bombing, which injured 40 other people, 25 of whom have been hospitalised, was the latest attack inside Russia on a high-profile pro-war figure.

EU lashes out at China for support of Russia

Brussels (AP): The European Union's foreign policy chief on Tuesday lashed out at China for its support of Russia amid the invasion of Ukraine and called it "a blatant violation" of Beijing's United Nations commitments. "There cannot be siding with the aggressor," Josep Borrell said. "There is a clear expectation from a permanent member of the (UN) Security Council to stand up in defence of international rules-based order and China as a moral duty to contribute to a fair peace."

Standing alongside visiting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Borrell was forceful in his condemnation of a nation that has increasingly moved from being a partner to being a rival on the global stage. The comments come just ahead of a visit of EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen together with French President Emmanuel Macron to China, where

both will press the point that EU-China relations will pivot on Beijing's friendship with Russia. Macron and von der Leyen are set to warn China against sending weapons to Russia during talks with President Xi Jinping on Thursday.

Even if Beijing says it is neutral in the war, Xi's visit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow two weeks ago had all the visuals and speeches of a meeting among trusted friends.

"They agreed on the need to not deploy nuclear arms abroad," Borrell said of the Moscow meeting. "Some days later, Russia deployed tactical weapons, nuclear tactical weapons in Belarus," he added, referring to an announcement by Putin of plans to deploy such weapons.

Borrell said he was looking for a change of heart in Beijing if relations were not to deteriorate.

'Still assessing what intel China was able to gather from spy balloon'

Washington (PTI): The United States has said it is still doing an assessment of what exactly intelligence information China was able to gather from its spy balloon that flew over sensitive American military sites in February. The comments from the Pentagon came after a media report said the Chinese spy balloon gathered information about some of the US military sites through electronic signals.

"As of right now, we're still doing an assessment of what exactly the intel was that China was able to gather but we do know that the steps that we took provided little additive value for what they've been able to collect from satellites before," Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh told reporters at a news conference here. The balloon had entered the United States from Alaska on January 28 and crossed through several States over various sensitive military sites,

including Montana where the US stores some of its nuclear assets, before it was shot down in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of South Carolina on February 4.

NBC News, citing two current senior US officials and one former senior administration official, said China was able to control the balloon so it could make multiple passes over some of the sites (at times flying figure eight formations) and transmit the information it collected back to Beijing in real-time. "The intelligence China collected was mostly from electronic signals, which can be picked up from weapons systems or include communications from base personnel, rather than images, the officials said," the news channel said.

Responding to questions, Singh said because of the steps that the US was able to take, it was able to prevent transmission of certain aspects of the sites to be transmitted.

Ex-Kosovo President Thaci tells international judges he's innocent

AP ■ THE HAGUE

Former Kosovo president Hashim Thaci on Tuesday insisted he is an innocent man as he addressed a panel of international judges hearing his trial on 10 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. At the end of his lawyers' opening statement to the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, Thaci stood up, buttoned up his gray pinstripe suit jacket and told black-robed judges that he expects evidence to lead to his acquittal saying that "victims do not obtain justice when the innocent are pursued."

Thaci was a student who came out of what he described as political exile in Switzerland to join Kosovo's struggle for independence from Serbia. He was embraced by Western leaders who invited him to 1999 peace talks in France in his role as political director of the Kosovo Liberation Army and was seen as a leader who could guide the country



toward independence.

Thaci said he regretted that late US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and other international diplomats who have died in the nearly quarter of a century since the war could not speak on his behalf. "They would have testified on my part about what I have said and what I did during that very important time in Kosovo's history," he said. "I'm happy that many others like them have come forward to testify about my innocence." But prosecutors paint a different picture,

alleging Thaci and three other former senior leaders of the KLA on trial with him were responsible for murders and the illegal detention and abuse of people they considered traitors or collaborators with Serb forces.

"I'm innocent of all these allegations," Thaci said. "However, I'm ready to face this new challenge and succeed for my family, my people and my country." Defence lawyer Gregory Kehoe told judges that Thaci had no "effective command and control" over the KLA at the time international prosecutors hold him responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed by members of the guerrilla force in Kosovo's 1998-99 war for independence from Serbia. The issue of how much control Thaci and three other former high-ranking KLA leaders on trial with him had over KLA fighters will be key in the trial that opened Monday and is expected to last many months.

France boosts military spending amid Ukraine war

Paris (AP): The French government on Tuesday approved a key budget bill presented as the country's biggest military spending spree in more than 50 years, underscoring the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine. The bill foresees 413 billion euros (USD 450 billion) in military spending or the period covering 2024-2030 - up by more than a third relative to the previous timeframe.

Defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu said bill's political, budgetary, military and technological drive is comparable to the huge push in the 1960s that saw France develop nuclear weapons, making the country one of the world's major military powers. Championed by French President Emmanuel Macron, the bill would notably modernise France's nuclear arsenal, boost intelligence spending by 60 per cent, double the number of military reservists, reinforce cyberdefence and develop more remote-controlled weapons. It would also boost the arms industry's production capacity in order to provide assistance to Ukraine and adequately supply the French military. "An issue we unfortunately rediscovered with the war in Ukraine is the issue of the ammunition stocks... We will need a ten-year period of time to upgrade all infrastructures and equipment of our military," Lecornu said. Lecornu also pointed to the need for anti-drone technology and equipment as being at the heart of the government's concerns ahead of the Paris Olympics next year and other major events.

Macron heads to China for talks on Ukraine, trade

AP ■ PARIS

French President Emmanuel Macron will muster all his diplomatic adeptness and political acumen on a three-day state visit to China where the war in Ukraine will be front and center, along with tough talks on trade. Macron is expected to warn China against sending weapons to Russia and instead ask that the country use its influence to support peace efforts. Beijing claims to hold a neutral stance in the war, but has also stressed its "no-limits friendship" with Russia. China's President Xi Jinping last month met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

A top French official acknowledged that Paris isn't expecting to see a major shift in the position of China's, which has refused to criticize Russia for its actions in



Ukraine. But France will push for initiatives helping ordinary Ukrainians and for possible avenues toward reaching a halfway solution to the war, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with the French presidency's customary practices. Paris and Beijing may find a point of convergence following Putin's recent announcement that his country plans to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus.

China, without naming Russia, made clear its opposition to the planned deployment. Macron will also seek to involve China deeper in global discussions on climate-related issues, as things are getting more complicated for him at home. The 45-year-old leader has in recent weeks faced strong opposition among ordinary French citizens and lawmakers to his plan to raise the legal retirement age from 62 to 64.

US chip controls threaten China's tech ambitions

Beijing (AP): Furious at US efforts that cut off access to technology to make advanced computer chips, China's leaders appear to be struggling to figure out how to retaliate without hurting their own ambitions in telecoms, artificial intelligence and other industries.

President Xi Jinping's government sees the chips that are used in everything from phones to kitchen appliances to fighter jets as crucial assets in its strategic rivalry with Washington and efforts to gain wealth and global influence. Chips are the center of a "technology war," a Chinese scientist wrote in an official journal in February. China has its own chip foundries, but they supply only low-end processors used



in autos and appliances. The US government, starting under then-President Donald Trump, is cutting off access to a growing array of tools to make chips for computer servers, AI and other advanced applications. Japan and the Netherlands have joined in limiting access to technology they say might be used to

make weapons.

Xi, in unusually pointed language, accused Washington in March of trying to block China's development with a campaign of "containment and suppression." He called on the public to "dare to fight." Despite that, Beijing has been slow to retaliate against US companies, possibly to avoid disrupting Chinese industries that assemble most of the world's smartphones, tablet computers and other consumer electronics. They import more than USD 300 billion worth of foreign chips every year.

The ruling Communist Party is throwing billions of dollars at trying to accelerate chip development and reduce the need for foreign technology.

Aus bans TikTok from Federal govt devices

Canberra (AP): Australia has become the last of the "Five Eyes" security partners to ban the Chinese-owned video-sharing app TikTok from its federal government's devices.

Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus said in a statement on Tuesday that based on intelligence and security agencies' advice, that ban would come into effect "as soon as practicable." The so-called Five Eyes intelligence-sharing partners — the United States, Canada, Britain and New Zealand — have taken similar steps.

TikTok objected to the decision. "We are extremely disappointed by this decision, which, in our view, is driven by politics, not by fact," the company's general manager for Australia, Lee Hunter, said in a statement. "Again, we stress that

there is no evidence to suggest that TikTok is in any way a security risk to Australians and should not be treated differently to other social media platforms."

He urged the Australian government to treat all businesses fairly, "regardless of country of origin." Western governments are worried that TikTok poses risks to cybersecurity and data privacy, and that the app could be used to promote pro-Beijing narratives and misinformation. TikTok is owned by the Chinese technology company ByteDance and has long maintained that it does not share data with the Chinese government. It is carrying out a project to store US user data on Oracle servers, which it says will put the information out of China's reach.

Oil drilling in Gulf safer, but concerns linger, report says

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Thirteen years after the massive Deepwater Horizons spill fouled the Gulf of Mexico, regulators and industry have reduced some risks in deep water exploration in the gulf but some troublesome safety issues persist, a new study by the National Academy of Sciences said. The creation of a specific federal agency for offshore oil drilling safety, an industrywide safety centre and new technology have all helped reduce risks, Tuesday's report said. But federal inspectors remain relatively powerless over contractors on rigs, which are 80 per cent of the workers. The report also worried about the lack of an industrywide safety culture that integrates accident prevention into everyday work. "There are a lot of things that are happening that are really good, but the industry is not at a place" where it should be, said panel chairman Richard Sears. He was a longtime Shell executive who was the chief technical adviser to the federal panel that initially investigated the 2010 explosion on the BP rig that killed 11 people and caused America's biggest oil spill — more than 130 million gallons. A culture that gave lip service to



safety but didn't really integrate it into the way it does business was part of the problem with the accident, Sears and others said. Some companies are treating safety the proper way — including giving flash bonuses to workers who stopped drilling because of potential dangers — but others "that don't seem to get it," he said.

"They have not figured out how to naturally embrace safety in particular... in who they are and what they do" but instead treat it like a box to check off, Sears said. That's far different from the more uniform industrywide safety culture seen in commercial airlines and nuclear power plants, he said.

Pak SC declares EC decision on Punjab polls unconstitutional

Pak Cabinet rejects verdict

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Tuesday termed as "unconstitutional" the election commission's decision to postpone polls in the Punjab province till October 8, in a major blow to the federal government that has been trying to delay the provincial election citing security issues and the economic crisis. The apex court also fixed May 14 as the date for polls in the politically crucial Punjab province, in a boost to ousted prime minister Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's federal Cabinet on Tuesday rejected the Supreme Court's "unanimous verdict" on advancing the elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Pak CJ halts immediate release of SC registrar

Islamabad: Pakistan's Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial on Tuesday directed the registrar of the Supreme Court to not relinquish the charge of his office amidst the worsening row between the government and the top judiciary in the coup-prone country. Chief Justice Bandial took the step after the cabinet removed Ishrat Ali, ordering him to report at the Establishment Division, the top government

provinces which were earlier postponed by the election commission.

The development came during the Cabinet's meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif after a three-member bench headed by

offices supervising the transfer and posting of senior officers, Dunya News reported. The row began when the Cabinet on Monday threw its weight behind the senior Supreme Court judge Justice Qazi Faez Isa who had ordered Ali's removal the other day. Ali had irked Justice Isa by issuing a circular of Bandial in which he disregarded the judgment of Isa of March 31 regarding taking up suo motu actions.

Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial announced the apex court's verdict on the matter which it had reserved on Monday, Geo News reported. On March 22, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) delayed assembly polls in the politically cru-

cial Punjab province by more than five months, citing the deteriorating security situation in the cash-starved country, a move criticised by Khan's PTI. The verdict on the issue was delivered by a three-member bench — headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Ijaz Ahsan. Heavy security was deployed outside the apex court's building, with a large contingent of police guarding the main entrance. The top court declared the ECP decision as "illegal" and "unconstitutional".

"The impugned order dated 22.03.2023 ('EC Order') made by the Election Commission of Pakistan ('Commission') is declared to be unconstitutional, without lawful authority or jurisdiction, void ab-initio, of no legal effect and is hereby quashed," the ruling said.

Lahore ATC extends Khan's interim bail in three cases

PTI ■ LAHORE

An anti-terrorism court in Pakistan's Punjab province on Tuesday extended the interim bail to Imran Khan until April 13 in three cases filed relating to the clashes that took place between his supporters and the police outside the residence of the former prime minister in Lahore last month. ATC Judge Abher Gul Khan, issuing the orders, extended the bail of 70-year-old Khan in multiple cases after the cricketer-turned-politician appeared before the court in a personal capacity, the Dawn newspaper reported. A video posted by his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party showed the PTI chief arriving at the court with black headgear as his security detail held up protective shields.

In the last hearing, presiding judge Ijaz Ahmad Buttari directed the PTI chief to ensure his appearance at each subsequent hearing and also join the police investigation into the

cases. The police registered the cases against Khan and other PTI leaders for allegedly attacking the police teams and burning official property and vehicles outside his Zaman Park residence here. Besides Section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, offences under various sections of the Pakistan Penal Code have been included in the FIRs. At the beginning of Tuesday's hearing, the judge highlighted that Khan had not yet submitted his surety bonds. Khan's counsel Barrister Salman Safdar responded that the former prime minister was facing threats to his life. The judge then inquired whether or not Khan would appear in the court, stressing that relief could be granted to anyone who appeared in the court.

The court then directed Khan's counsel to produce his client by 11 am.

During the hearing, the leader of the joint investigation team (JIT) investigating the alleged assassination threats against the PTI chief arrived in

court and said the party leader had not become a part of the investigation. The caretaker government of Punjab had on March 22 decided to form a committee led by SSP Imran Kishwar to conduct an inquiry into claims of the ex-prime minister that a conspiracy has been hatched to assassinate him. The announcement regarding the inquiry commission was made by interim Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi to conduct and finalise the probe into FIRs registered in Lahore. The court then directed Khan's counsel to submit a written statement and summoned the head of the JIT to appear in the next hearing.

The judge also directed the JIT to complete the probe at the earliest.

The PTI chief was injured on November 3 last year when shots were fired by a gunman at Khan's container-mounted truck in an assassination attempt during an election rally speech in Wazirabad, Punjab.

Bilawal Bhutto apprehensive of martial law in Pak: Reports

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has expressed his apprehension about emergency or martial law in the country if a larger Supreme Court bench was not constituted to hear the case regarding the postponement of provincial elections in Punjab, according to a media report on Tuesday.

Bilawal's concerns stem from the ongoing political and judiciary crisis in the cash-starved country wherein the Supreme Court is hearing the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's petition against the Election Commission of Pakistan's decision to postpone the Punjab Assembly polls. Bilawal, who is also the head of the People's Party (PPP), spoke with the media on Monday in Larkana, his seat in the Sindh province, and said his party would not accept whatever decision of the three judges on elections in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab, The News International reported.

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Tuesday termed as "unconstitutional" the election commission's decision to postpone polls in the Punjab province till October 8, in a major blow to the federal government that has been trying to delay the provincial election citing security issues and the economic crisis. "The party will embrace (only) the decision of the full court and implement the same," he said.

He said that PPP is defending the Constitution. He added that Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the PPP founder, had given the nation the 1973 Constitution which was breached by dictators, including Pervez Musharraf, but former president Asif Ali Zardari had restored it. He said that the sons and daughters of dictators are in the PTI and added that party supremo Imran Khan was the chief polling agent of Pervez Musharraf in a held referendum.

He said that a three-judge decision would not be accepted because one of them, through his judgment, had handed over the Punjab government to PTI by rejecting some votes in the election of the chief minister last year.

He asked the Chief Justice of Pakistan to constitute a full court in the larger interest of the nation. Pakistan has a history of military rule and so far generals have ruled almost half of the history of the creation of the country. Bilawal's warning comes as the country is gripped with bitter political, judicial and economic crises.

Fire damages clothing market in Bangladesh; eight injured

PTI ■ DHAKA

A massive fire partly destroyed one of the biggest clothing markets here in the Bangladesh capital on Tuesday, injuring eight people, including two fire personnel. The fire broke out at the Bangabazar market around 6:10 am and was brought under control after over six hours of efforts at 12:36 pm, Shahjahan Shikder, officer-in-charge of the media wing of Fire Service and Civil Defence said.

However, the fire was seen spreading to neighbouring buildings as a result of strong winds. Flames could still be observed in various locations. Bangladesh Air Force helicopters sprayed water over the burning market, the bdnews24.com portal reported. At least eight people, including two members of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, were injured while working to control the massive fire, the Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported.

According to Rafi Al



Faruk, duty officer of the Fire Service and Civil Defence control room, 48 fire service units were working to control the fire. The cause of the fire is yet to be known. The first unit of firefighters reached the scene within two minutes, said Anwarul Islam Dolon, an official in the media department of the Fire Service. Eyewitnesses said that owners and employees of shops in the market rushed to the spot after hearing the news of the fire. They were seen

removing goods from their stores and moving them to a safe location. Businessmen at the site said that at least six markets in Bangabazar caught fire. Bangabazar Market has some 2,900 shops and about 150,000 people work there. Bangabazar, one of the biggest markets in the country, houses hundreds of stores constructed of tin and wood. With the advent of Eid, clothing stores stocked up new products aiming for a big sale.

20 dead in eastern Congo landslide

Goma (AP): At least 20 people were killed in a landslide in eastern Congo, the government said on Monday. The landslide occurred in Bolowa village in Masisi territory on Sunday, Lt. Col. Guillaume Ndjike Kaiko announced in a statement. "As a result of this unfortunate incident, twenty people among our compatriots lost their lives and others are still missing and being searched for," he said.

About 25 mothers with their children were doing laundry in a stream at the foot of a mountain when the landslide happened, burying some of them, Alphonse Mushesha Mihingano, a local administrator told The Associated Press. Eastern Congo's been wracked by violence linked to more than 120 armed groups fighting for power, land and natural resources, while some fight to protect their communities. Landslides in this town don't happen often, however they sometimes occur in other parts of the area. Last September about 100 people died in Bihambwe village in Masisi territory from a landslide.

One killed, many injured in train derailment near The Hague

Voorschoten (Netherlands): A passenger train slammed into a construction crane and derailed near The Hague in the early hours of Tuesday, sending two carriages into a field next to the tracks. One person died and 19 were hospitalised, Dutch emergency services said. Police opened an investigation to establish if any crime was committed. Another independent probe was opened into the cause of the crash.

Television images showed people using temporary bridges and ladders to cross a narrow drainage canal running alongside the rails to reach the stricken train in the darkness. Many windows in the train carriages were broken. It was not clear if that happened during the accident or as passengers attempted to escape. Two of the bright yellow and blue train carriages came to rest perpendicular to the tracks across the small canal and partially in a field. What appeared to be the front of the train was badly damaged. Other parts of the train were partially derailed.



Video footage from inside the train in the immediate aftermath of the crash showed chaotic scenes as passengers tried to get out of the wreckage in darkness. Dutch King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima also expressed their sympathy in a tweet, and Willem-Alexander visited the site late Tuesday morning. The four-carriage passenger train was carrying about 50 passengers at the time of the crash.

John Voppen, CEO of the rail network company Pro Rail, said that the passenger train and a freight train both hit a crane that was being used to carry out maintenance work. He said the crane was on tracks that were not being used by train traffic and it is not clear how the trains collided with the crane. "We don't understand how this could have happened," he told reporters at a news conference.

Indian student alleges anti-India smear campaign at London university

London (PTI): An Indian student has claimed that he was disqualified from the London School of Economics (LSE) Students' Union elections as a result of a deliberately orchestrated smear campaign because of his Indian and Hindu identity. Karan Kataria, who is from Haryana and is studying for a postgraduate law degree at the leading university in London, said he

was motivated by the support of his peers to contest the post of General Secretary of the LSE Students' Union (LSESU). However, he was disqualified last week over what he believes are baseless allegations and without being given a chance to fully state his case.

"Unfortunately, some individuals could not bear to see an Indian-Hindu leading the LSESU and resorted to vilify-



ing my character and very identity in what was clearly in

line with the alarming cancel culture which is uprooting our social communities," said Kataria. "When I started my postgraduate studies at LSE, I sincerely hoped to strive for and further fulfil my passion for student welfare. But my dreams were shattered when a deliberately orchestrated smear campaign was launched against me solely because of my Indian and Hindu identi-

ty," he said. The 22-year-old student comes from a middle-class farming background and describes himself as a first-generation university-level graduate in his family. Soon after arriving in the UK for his Master's from the LSE Law School last year, he was elected as his cohort's Academic Representative and also a delegate to the UK's

National Union of Students (NUS). "Despite receiving immense support from students of all nationalities, I was disqualified from the General Secretary election of the LSE Student Union. The allegations against me ranged from being homophobic, Islamophobic, queerphobic, and Hindu Nationalist. ... Instead of

identifying and punishing the wrongdoers who initiated this hateful campaign... the LSESU conveniently disqualified me without hearing my side of the story or revealing the votes I received," said Kataria.

US military says senior IS commander killed in Syria

AP ■ BEIRUT

A drone strike carried out by the American-led coalition in northwestern Syria has killed a senior member of the Islamic State group who was in charge of planning attacks in Europe, the United States military said Tuesday. The man killed Monday in the strike was identified by a U.S. military statement as Khalid Aydd Ahmad al-Jabouri. The military state-

ment added that his death "will temporarily disrupt the organisation's ability to plot external attacks." The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said on Monday that one person was killed in a drone strike near the rebel-held village of Kefteen.

The opposition's Syrian Civil Defense, also known as the White Helmets, said it evacuated the man from the

scene of the attack and he later succumbed to his wounds. The strike was the latest in a series of attacks over the past years targeting al-Qaida-linked militants and senior members of the Islamic State group in northwestern Syria. Most of those killed by US strikes in the rebel-held Idlib province over the past years were members of al-Qaida offshoot Horas al-Din, which is Arabic for "Guardians of Religion."

Af Taliban raid kills 6 members of IS group

Islamabad (AP): An overnight raid by Taliban forces in Afghanistan's northern Balkh province killed six members of the extremist Islamic State group, a Taliban spokesman said on Tuesday. The regional affiliate of the IS group — known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province — has been the key rival of the Taliban since their takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021.

The militant group has increased its attacks, targeting both Taliban patrols and members of Afghanistan's Shiite minority. According to Mohammad Asif Waziri, a spokesman for the police chief in Balkh, the operation late Monday night targeted an IS hideout in Nahri Shahi district and six members of the militant group were killed. The Taliban swept across Afghanistan in August 2021, seizing power as US and NATO forces were withdrawn after 20 years of war. The international community has not recognised the Taliban government, wary of the harsh measures they have imposed since their takeover — including restricting rights and freedoms, especially for women and minorities.

New images from inside Fukushima reactor spark safety concerns

Tokyo (AP): Images captured by a robotic probe inside one of the three melted reactors at the tsunami-wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant showed exposed steel bars in the main supporting structure and parts of its thick external concrete wall missing, triggering concerns about its earthquake resistance in case of another major disaster. The plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, has been sending robotic probes inside the Unit 1 primary containment chamber since last year. The new findings released on

Tuesday were from the latest probe conducted at the end of March. An underwater remotely operated vehicle ROV-A2 was sent inside the Unit 1 pedestal, a supporting structure right underneath the core. It came back with images seen for the first time since an earthquake and tsunami crippled the plant 12 years ago. The area inside of the pedestal is where traces of the melted fuel could most likely be found. An approximately five-minute video — part of 39-hour-long images captured by the robot — showed the 120-centimetre

(3.9-foot) -thick concrete exterior of the pedestal was significantly damaged near its bottom, exposing the steel reinforcement inside. TEPCO spokesman Keisuke Matsuo told reporters on Tuesday that the steel reinforcement is seen largely intact but the company planned to further analyze data and images over the next couple of months in order to find out if and how the reactor's earthquake resistance can be improved. The images of the exposed steel reinforcement have triggered concerns for the reactor's safety.

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
TENDER NOTICE	
Invitation of tender through E-tendering (e-Procurement Systems)	
No. 6-SE/FILE-166192Tender	Dated 03/04/2023
NIT No.	6-SE-FileNo166192Tender
Name of Work and its location	Tender for 'Provision for supply, fixing & commissioning of Aluminium partitions work for providing chambers inside office space in main shop, Shot Blast shop, paint shop, body repair shop, wheel shop, bogie shop, power car shop and miscellaneous shop at RCNK Sonipat.'
Approx Cost of work	Rs. 47,38,234.23/- including GST (Rs. Forty Seven Lacs Thirty Eight Thousand Two Hundred Thirty Four & Paise Twenty Three Only)
Earnest Money	Rs. 94,800.00/-
Completion period of work	03 months of date of execution of work
Cost of Tender document on cash/by post	Nil
Date and Time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Upto 11:00 hrs on 25.04.2023 Opening of Tender at 11:30 hrs.
Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 1017/23	

NOTICE

We Mrs. Jitender Kaur Bhasin W/o Mr. Parminder Singh Bhasin R/o H. No. D-24, Model Town, Delhi - 110009, and Mr. Pawanjit Singh S/o Mr. Parminder Singh Bhasin R/o H. No. D-24, Model Town, Delhi - 110009, declare that we had purchased a property bearing No. Spira - 4019 in project Superhigh Supermova, located at Sector-94, Noida, U.P. We have lost the original allotment letter of the above said property. We Request Mrs. Supertech Realtors Pvt. Ltd. to issue the duplicate allotment letter of the said property, if anybody or financial Institutions have any objection, He/She may contact to Mrs. Supertech Limited office, Plot No. C-2, Sector 96, Noida - 201303, U.P. within 15 Days.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that, I, Ram Kumar Daggar S/o Rati Ram Daggar employed as DY. COMDT in BSF (Border Security Force) R/o VPO Jindoli Alwar, Rajasthan-301404 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as RAM KUNWAR JAI, in my 10th & 12th educational documents and as Ram Kaur in BA educational documents. The Actual name of mine is RAM KUMAR DAGGAR, which may be amended accordingly. Objection if any shall be communicated to Commandant 146 Bn BSF (Border Security Force)- Khanetar Nallah Poonch (Jammu) within one week from publication of this notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is publicly notified that plot No. D-25, Sec. 40, Noida, Distt. Gautam Buddh Nagar U.P. is in the joint name of late Shri Devdutt Talwar s/o late Hukumchand Talwar and Pramod Kumar Talwar s/o late Shri Devdutt Talwar R/o D-25, Sec. 40, Noida, Distt. Gautam Buddh Nagar U.P. That father of Pramod Kumar Talwar, late Shri Devdutt Talwar, executed the will in favor of his son Pramod Kumar Talwar regarding his 50% share in the said property, which is registered in the office of Sub Registrar, Noida, District Gautam Buddh Nagar U.P. It is informed to the general public through this notice that an application is moved before Noida Authority for the transfer of the said property i.e. Plot number D-25, Sec. 40, Noida, Distt. Gautam Buddh Nagar U.P. in favor of Shri Pramod Kumar Talwar. If anyone has any objection, he/she may submit his/her objections to the residential department of Noida authority along with proof/witness within 30 days of the publication of this notice. Advocate- Mani Mittal

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large of Mrs. Aaysha who is purchasing the Third Floor with roof rights of Property bearing No. 38 area measuring 51.1/4 sq. yards i.e. 42.85 sq. meters out of Kharsa No. 27/20, Situated at abadi of Brij Puri Extension-2 in the area of Village Khurji Kharsa, Illaga Shadara Delhi-110051 from Mrs. Sahana who had owner through GPA Dated 15.12.2009 (as doc. No. 11604), and same to be financed & mortgaged by Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. If any Person having any type of claim/right/title/interest over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien, disputes etc.

Lucem Legal LLP
B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank, Sector 2, Noida, UP - 201301; Contact# 0120-4269379

M.P. MADHYA KSHETRA VIDYUT VITARAN COMPANY LTD.
(Government of M.P. Undertaking)
Nishitha Parisar, Bijalee Nagar, Govindpura, Bhopal-462023., (Ph. No. : 0755-2602033-36, Fax No. : 0755-2589821, 2586636)
No. MD/MK/04/19 Bhopal, Dated : 04.04.2023

TENDER NOTICE

MPMKVVCL, Bhopal invites online Bids from Agencies for supply & execution of below mentioned works as per Tender Specification under RDSS Scheme-

Tender Specification Number	Particular of material for Procurement	Lot & Name of Circle	Approx. Value (Rs. Lakh)	Tender Fee (incl. GST) (in Rs.)	Date of Pre Bid Conference	Date of Opening of Tender
MD/MK/04/897	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of New 11 KV line for Bifurcation & Interconnection, Additional 11 KV Bay at 33/11 KV Sub-station, Augmentation of Conductor of 11 KV Lines, Additional Distribution Transformer Substations with associate New 11 KV Lines, LT Line on AB Cable, Conversion of bare LT line with AB Cable, Augmentation of LT AB Cable, 11 KV Line Crossing Agriculture & Non Agriculture Feeder, other associated work and Supporting works such as DPs, TPs, Crossing etc. Package- VI-B Part-II in Bhopal & Gwalior Region of MPMKVCL, Bhopal under Revamped Reforms-based and Results-linked Distribution Sector Scheme- (RDSS)	Lot-XI (Bhind)	10297.44	23600.00	11.04.2023 03.00 PM	24.04.2023 03.00 PM

Other details and full tender document would be available on our Company website <https://portal.mpcz.in> & MP Govt. website <https://mptenders.gov.in> very shortly.
M.P. Madhyam/109251/2023

CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (PROC.)

World Bank slashes India's GDP to 6.3%

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The World Bank on Tuesday slashed India's GDP to 6.3 per cent as against an estimate of 6.6 per cent in fiscal 2023-24, citing high borrowing costs and slower income growth as among reasons behind the downgrade.

"In India, South Asia's largest economy, high borrowing costs and slower income growth are expected to dampen consumption and lower growth to 6.3 per cent in FY 2023/24," the World Bank said in a report for South Asia released on Tuesday ahead of the annual spring meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

"The main reason for the downgrade of the forecast is weak consumption, and also tightening of fiscal policies, and especially tightening of the current expenditure by the government. Domestic consumption is held back by the tighter fiscal situation," Hans Timmer, World Bank Chief Economist for South Asia, told reporters during a news conference here.

In general, the situation in India is better than in many of the other countries in South Asia, he noted. The situation in the financial sector is healthier than seen in many of the other coun-

tries. Observing that the banks in India are in good shape and they have improved after the pandemic, Timmer said that there is healthy credit supply in the economy and private investment is relatively strong compared to recent years. The main challenge in India, the World Bank economist said, is that only a small part of the potential in India is being utilised.

"In India female labour force participation has dropped below 20 per cent. There is also no sign that the informal sector is becoming more productive or becoming smaller. So, there is still a huge structural agenda in India to make growth more inclusive to increase participation," he said.

"There's also still a reform agenda needed to increase private investment from abroad, especially in the services sector," he said, adding that there is also the challenge of climate change in India to prepare for the changing climate and to play its role in mitigating global emissions.

"But in the short run, (India has a) healthier economy than in the rest of South Asia," Timmer said.

All countries in the region except Bhutan have downgraded their forecasts, the World Bank said in its report.

Growth in Pakistan - which is still reeling from the impacts of last year's



catastrophic floods and facing supply chain disruptions, deteriorating investor confidence, and higher borrowing and input costs - is projected to drop to 0.4 per cent this year, assuming agreement on an IMF programme, he reached, it said.

In Sri Lanka, GDP is expected to contract by 4.3 per cent this year reflecting the lasting impact of the macro-debt crisis, with future growth prospects - following last month's IMF programme approval - heavily dependent on debt restructuring and struc-

tural reforms, the bank said.

The resumption of tourism and migration has supported growth in Maldives and Nepal. But high external debt and tightened global financial conditions pose risks to Maldives' fiscal and external accounts, and in Nepal, external shocks, domestic import restrictions, and monetary tightening are expected to hamper growth, said the report.

"South Asia's economies have been scarred by a combination of extreme shocks over the past three years, and the

recovery remains incomplete," said Martin Raiser, World Bank Vice President for South Asia.

"Countries should use the opportunity of lower energy prices and improving trade balances to move away from ad hoc measures, such as fuel subsidies and import restrictions implemented to address these shocks, and focus on reforms needed to build resilience and boost medium-term growth," it said.

According to the report, inflation in South Asia is set to fall to 8.9 per cent this year, and to below seven per cent in 2024. However, weaker currencies and delayed domestic price adjustments are contributing to a slower than anticipated decline in inflation. Elevated global and domestic food prices are contributing to greater food insecurity for South Asia's poor who spend a larger share of income on food, it said.

"South Asia's stark socio-economic divides are both unfair and inefficient. They keep talented individuals from contributing to society, reduce incentives to invest in human capital, and derail long-term economic growth," said Hans Timmer, World Bank Chief Economist for South Asia.

"Addressing these structural issues is vital to ensuring the region can achieve its full potential," he added.



Capex can't be driven largely by public investment: Assocham

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Industry body Assocham on Tuesday said capital expenditure cannot be driven largely by public investment and the private sector must participate to increase investments in India's economy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month urged India Inc to increase investment in tandem with the government's decision to raise capital expenditure (capex) and take advantage of the opportunities unveiled in the Union Budget 2023-24.

The chamber's newly appointed President Ajay Singh said he foresees a "significant rise in private investment" in the coming 2-3 years, driven by the Centre's capex push.

"It cannot be that expenditure in the economy is largely public expenditure. The private sector has to participate and with the environment that is being created today, with the infrastructure spend that the government is doing, opportunities available to companies both in India and overseas. I think you will see an uptick in private investment in the next 2-3 years," Singh said addressing a press conference.

Singh, also the Chairman and Managing Director of Spicejet, said he believes the private sector has begun to realise that it needs to seize India's moment.

The Assocham President also said it was time for the RBI to push the pause button to the hike in repo rates as sectors like auto and housing need a signal that interest rates are easing.

"RBI has done a fabulous job in the way they have managed interest rates. We do feel, however, that at this time, any further hike in interest rates is

possibly going to have a somewhat adverse impact on certain sectors. Therefore, our suggestion would be to consider carefully before any further hikes," Singh said.

Asserting that several pandemic-hit MSMEs were unable to pay statutory dues on time, the Assocham President said it will urge the government to give concessions on interest rates to such units.

"We will be suggesting to the government that as many of these companies were unable to pay on time, statutory charges and various dues to government authorities, we would request moderation of charges, the interest that the government charges on such delayed payments," he said.

Further, he said several Assocham members have raised the issue of timely payments by the government authorities to them which remains a cause of concern.

"We will certainly try and play the role of that bridge take some of those problems to the government for solutions," Singh said.

Responding to a related query, he said a significant part of those dues are outstanding from the PSUs and government agencies.

The Spicejet Chairman and Managing Director observed that while Value Added Tax (VAT) on Aviation Turbine Fuel has come down significantly, except in four states, including Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam and Delhi.

"Every other state, including states like Karnataka and Maharashtra where there is a large offtake of aviation fuel have reduced VAT from 28 per cent to 18 per cent and hopefully we will find a way to reduce it further," Singh said.

Automobile retail sales see double-digit growth in FY23; PV offtake at record high

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Automobile retail sales grew in double-digits in the country last fiscal, driven by a record offtake of 36 lakh passenger vehicles, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) said on Tuesday.

Total retail sales rose to 2,21,50,222 units last fiscal, up 21 per cent from 1,83,27,326 units in FY22. The passenger vehicle registrations rose by 23 per cent to 36,20,039 units, as against 29,42,273 units in 2021-22.

Two-wheelers retail sales rose by 19 per cent to 1,59,95,968 units in FY23 compared to 1,34,94,214 units in 2021-22. Commercial vehicle retail sales rose 33 per cent while three-wheeler registrations witnessed an 84 per cent increase as compared with 2021-22.

Tractor retail sales grew by 8 per cent last fiscal as compared with FY22.

"FY23 was the first full year without any impact of Covid after a gap of two years.



Consequently, overall retail sales during the year experienced double-digit growth of 21 per cent," FADA President Manish Raj Singhania said.

He noted that last fiscal the retail sales of passenger vehicles reached a record high of 36 lakh vehicles, a growth of 23 per cent as compared with FY22.

The previous high was in FY19 when retail sales were at 32 lakh units.

The segment benefitted from numerous new launches and better product availability due to the easing of the semiconductor shortage, Singhania said.

The demand for higher-

end variants helped sustain sales but the entry-level variants remain under pressure as customers in this category are still affected by high inflation, he added.

Singhania noted that the two-wheeler segment fell to a seven-year low with total retail sales of 1.59 crore last year.

On sales outlook for the current fiscal, the industry body noted: "As the high-growth period has now passed, FY24 is expected to see tapered growth in the low single digits due to a high base, inflationary pressures, routine price hikes, and regulatory changes."

Overall, it will be a year of

consolidation for the auto retail industry with an overall single-digit growth over the previous year, it added. In March, passenger vehicle retail sales increased by 14 per cent year-on-year in March riding on the back of improved supply of electronic components.

The domestic passenger vehicle registrations rose to 3,35,266 units last month, from 2,93,016 units in March 2022. Two-wheeler retail sales rose to 14,45,867 in March, up 12 per cent from 12,86,109 units in the year-ago period.

Similarly, the commercial vehicle registrations last month rose to 92,790 units, up 10 per cent from 84,124 units in March last year. Three-wheeler retail sales rose 69 per cent year-on-year to 86,857 units in March.

Tractor registrations last month rose to 81,607 units, up 4 per cent from 78,070 units in March 2022. Total registrations last month rose to 20,41,847 units in March, up 14 per cent from 17,92,802 units in the year-ago period.



Windfall tax on domestic crude oil cut to zero, on export of diesel halved

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has cut the windfall profit tax on domestically produced crude oil to zero and halved the levy on the export of diesel to Rs 0.50 per litre in line with softening international oil prices, according to an official order.

The levy on crude oil produced by companies such as Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has been reduced to nil from Rs 3,500 per tonne (USD 5.8 per barrel), the order dated April 3 said.

Alongside, the government cut the tax on the export of diesel to Rs 0.50 per litre from Re 1, and the same on overseas shipments of ATF remains at nil.

The new tax rates came into effect from April 4, the order said.

The levy was cut in line with the softening trend seen in international oil prices in the second half of March. However, oil prices have shot up this month following a surprise cut in production announced by the producers' cartel OPEC and its allies like Russia.

Commenting on the move, Sabyasachi Majumdar, senior vice president and group head-corporate ratings, ICRA Limited, said there was a moderation in crude oil prices closer to the last revision in special additional excise duty (SAED) on March 21, 2023, hence the reduction in the duty.

"However, crude oil prices have jumped since the OPEC+ announcement of additional production cuts of 1.16 million barrels per day. Hence, the SAED can be expected to increase in the next revision if the crude prices remain elevated," he said.

The tax rates are reviewed every fortnight based on average oil prices in the previous two weeks.

The Government's collection from the SAED imposed on the production of crude oil and the export of petroleum products from July 1, 2022, is estimated at around Rs 40,000 crores in FY2023.

Crude oil pumped out of the ground and from below the seabed is refined and converted into fuels like petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF).

India first imposed windfall profit taxes on July 1 last year, joining a growing number of nations that tax supernormal profits of energy companies. At that time, export duties of Rs 6 per litre (USD 12 per barrel) each were levied on petrol and ATF and Rs 13 a litre (USD 26 a barrel) on diesel.

A Rs 23,250 per tonne (USD 40 per barrel) windfall profit tax on domestic crude production was also levied.

The export tax on petrol was scrapped in the very first review and that on ATF was done away with at the March 4 review.

Reliance Industries Ltd, which operates the world's largest single-location oil refinery complex at Jamnagar in Gujarat, and Rosneft-backed Nayara Energy are primary exporters of fuel in the country.

The government levies tax on windfall profits made by oil producers on any price they get above a threshold of USD 75 per barrel.

The levy on fuel exports is based on cracks or margins that refiners earn on overseas shipments. These margins are primarily a difference between the international oil price realised and the cost.

Indian Energy Exchange trade volume dips 4% year on year to 9212 million units in March

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Energy Exchange's total trade volume declined by 4 per cent to 9,212 million units (MU) in March compared to the same month a year ago.

On a month-on-month basis, the trade volume rose by 12 per cent, a statement said.

Indian Energy Exchange achieved 9,212 MU overall volume in March 2023, including green market trade of 391 MU, 8.69 lac RECs (equivalent to 869 MU) and 22,881 ESCerts (equivalent to 23 MU), a statement said.

The (average spot power) price during March 2023 was Rs 5.25 per unit, lower 23 per cent on MoM basis, due to cooler weather conditions, it explained.

The IEX achieved 26,052 MU volume across all segments during Q4 FY '23 (January-March 2023), growing 7 per cent over the previous quarter.



Cumulatively for the fiscal year 2023, the IEX traded 96.8 BU (billion units), a degrowth of 5 per cent YoY basis, despite a highly constrained sell-side liquidity, which led to the price increasing by 35 per cent on YoY basis, it explained.

The Day-Ahead Market (DAM) volume increased to 4745 MU in March '23 from 4664 MU in February '23, i.e. 2% growth on MoM basis due to favourable prices.

V3 Ventures plans to invest 30 mn euros in Indian start-ups

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

London-based V3 Ventures will invest around 30 per cent of its EUR 100 million fund in early-stage start-ups in India in the next 12-18 months.

V3 Ventures, Co-Founder and Investment Partner, Arjun Vaidya said that the company plans to invest the rest of the fund in the US and Europe.

"India's economy is still growing rapidly and we are one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. In this macro environment - India has a unique advantage.

"Given this, we expect consumer and technology businesses to thrive in the foreseeable future. This allows us to identify and back entrepreneurs who are building strong, purpose-driven, scalable brands," he said.

Wipro Consumer Care, Lighting FY23 sales cross ₹10,000 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wipro Consumer Care and Lighting on Tuesday said it has crossed the milestone of Rs 10,000 crore in overall sales in FY23, helped by 'significant growth' across geographies, brands, and categories.

The domestic FMCG business grew 17 per cent for the financial year ended March 31, 2023, the company, part of Azim Premji-led Wipro Enterprises, said in a statement.

Its sandalwood soap brand Santoor has now become the second largest player in the segment in India with sales of over Rs 2,650 crore. While female toiletries brand of Wipro Consumer Care and Lighting, Enchanter, has also crossed 1,000 crore, it added.

The company, which operates in FMCG and lighting products, had reported a revenue of Rs 8,634 crore for the



financial year ended March 31, 2022. "FY23 was a special year with the FMCG India business growing at 17 per cent and Malaysia strengthening its No 1 position in personal care with strong growth of over 20 per cent.

"Vietnam crossed the USD 100 million revenue mark with double-digit growth. Other markets with double-digit growth included South Africa, the Middle East & Philippines," it said. The company has also expanded its footprint in homecare across key markets with the launch of liquid detergents, fabric softeners, dish wash and floor cleaners.



'New foreign trade policy to promote exports through e-commerce'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023, announced recently, will help in promoting exports of sectors from e-commerce, batteries for electric vehicles and farm equipment, experts said on Tuesday.

India on March 31 came out with the new policy which aimed at pushing rupee trade, increasing outward shipments to USD 2 trillion by 2030, and promoting e-commerce exports, amid global uncertainties.

Rumki Majumdar, Economist at Deloitte India, said that the policy emphasises on the manufacturing and export sectors with a long term view.

Sectors such as batteries for EVs, green hydrogen, and garment, amongst others will benefit from the policy, she said, adding that with over 80 per cent of trade being done in the USD, encouraging trade in Indian rupee will be a relief.

"It will also add to its resilience to external shocks and improve negotiating capabilities in international trade," Majumdar said.

Shashi Mathews, Partner at IndusLaw, said that through the policy, the government's focus is to digitise and re-engineer the processes to make it more business-friendly and less time-consuming.

"Some key focus areas which will reap the benefits are e-commerce, merchandising trade, green technology products like EV, farming equipment, etc," Mathews said.

Gram Power to ramp up smart meter manufacturing capacity, eyes multi-fold topline growth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Homegrown smart metering firm Gram Power is eyeing a multi-fold growth in topline in the current fiscal as it is set to ramp up the manufacturing capacity to 10 million units per annum, according to a top company official.

"We have set up a manufacturing unit with a capacity of up to 3 million smart meters per year, and we aim to ramp up production to 10 million meters in the next 12-15 months to meet the growing demand for smart metering systems in the country," Yashraj Khaitan, Founder and CEO of Gram Power, told PTI.

Gram Power is eyeing about 10 per cent of the country's 300 million metering market over the next five years.

Khaitan said that once the additional capacity is functional, Gram Power's topline turnover will increase by 20 times in 2023-24. However, he did not disclose specific financial details. Recently, the company raised USD 100 million from I Squared Capital for capacity expansion works.

Under the Smart Meter National Programme, the government aims to replace 25 crore conventional meters with smart meters. Smart meters are connected through a web-based monitoring system which help to reduce commercial losses of



utilities and enhance their revenues. As part of the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS), the power ministry aims to improve operational efficiencies and financial sustainability for beleaguered power distribution companies (discoms) and state power departments. Recently, Gram Power was awarded a 10-year contract for Ladakh and Kargil Energy operations. The contract entails redesigning the entire distribu-

tion network cabling and installing 61,000 smart meters. "The terrain and scattered locations make this the most challenging project in the country," Khaitan said.

According to him, India is a flourishing market for advanced metering infrastructure and with the government's push towards digitisation and smart cities, the demand for smart metering solutions is expected to increase further.

The company, which has achieved good traction in the competitive smart metering industry, is executing various projects, including works related to the national grid, and help entities reduce their energy costs by up to 30 per cent.

Maruti Suzuki WagonR, Alto K10 score low safety rating in Global NCAP crash test

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vehicle safety group Global NCAP on Tuesday said it has given one- and two-star safety ratings for adult occupant protection to Maruti Suzuki India's popular models WagonR and AltoK 10, respectively after conducting crash tests.

Both the models scored zero stars for child occupant protection as per the Global NCAP's latest round of crash tests. The company, however, said its vehicles meet India's crash safety regulations which are almost similar to the standards in Europe.

Global NCAP rates vehicles from zero to five based on their safety features and automobiles with a higher rating are considered safer for occupants.



According to its latest test, Global NCAP stated that the Alto K10 showed a stable structure and marginal to good protection for adult chest to head in the frontal impact but showed weak protection to the chest in the side impact.

The WagonR also offered weak chest protection for the driver despite the improvements in the restraint systems by

Maruti Suzuki since the previous version of the model was tested by Global NCAP, it added.

"We have been delighted with the positive response from Indian automakers and some global automakers as well. Although there has been some limited improvement, we are yet to see this safety commitment deployed in the most popular Maruti Suzuki models," Global NCAP Secretary General Alejandro Furas noted.

Given that six airbags are becoming a mandatory requirement for new models sold in India, it is particularly worrying for Global NCAP that Maruti Suzuki does not even make this requirement available as a customer option, he added.

EVERTON STRIKE LATE TO HOLD TOTTENHAM

AP ■ LONDON

Michael Keane's stunning 90th minute equaliser struck dented Tottenham's challenge for a top-four finish in the Premier League as Cristian Stellini's caretaker spell in charge of Spurs started with a 1-1 draw at Everton.

Harry Kane's penalty looked set to take Tottenham third in the table after Abdoulaye Doucoure had been sent off for striking the Spurs striker in the face.

But the numbers were levelled up when Lucas Moura also saw red two minutes from time before Keane's thunderbolt salvaged a vital point in Everton's bid to beat the drop.

A draw is enough to take Sean Dyche's men out of the relegation zone and up to 15th.

Tottenham move level on points with Newcastle and Manchester United in fourth, but have played two games more than their rivals for a place in next season's Champions League.

"After the red card they were much more aggressive than us," said Stellini after Spurs failed to win away from home for the sixth consecutive game.

"We have to be a team that plays at home and away with the same desire and aggressiveness."

Stellini was taking charge for the first time since the sacking of his former boss Antonio Conte.

Conte's fate was sealed by a tirade towards the Tottenham squad after conceding twice late on to draw 3-3 at bottom-of-the-table Southampton.

But there was little sign of a



fresh start as the visitors again threw away a promising position against a side fighting relegation.

Everton were lucky to escape as Kane missed two huge chances inside the first 15 minutes.

The England captain should have been full of confidence after becoming his country's all-time

top goalscorer during the international break.

But Kane's scuffed effort gave Keane the chance to clear off the line with his first opportunity before he headed wide when completely unmarked from Ivan Perisic's cross.

No side has scored fewer goals in the Premier League than

Everton this season and the home side's lack of a focal point up front without the injured Dominic Calvert-Lewin was again exposed.

The home outfit did waste a glorious chance to take the lead when Idrissa Gueye selfishly blazed over from the edge of the box with teammates better

placed to take the shot just after half-time.

A moment of madness from Doucoure appeared to have undone the endeavour of Dyche's men for the first hour.

The French midfielder slapped Kane in the face after an altercation between the pair and could have no complaints at

Shaw extends contract at Man Utd to 2027

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Luke Shaw said he wants to be part of "something special" at Manchester United after signing a new contract until 2027 on Tuesday. The 27-year-old England international, who became the most expensive teenager in history when he moved to Old Trafford from Southampton in 2014, has been rewarded after becoming a key player for Erik ten Hag in the Dutchman's early months in charge at Old Trafford.

"Nine years ago, I signed for this amazing club, and I'm thrilled to be extending my stay," Shaw, who has made 249 appearances for United, told the club's website.

"I've grown immensely since coming to Manchester all those years ago, both as a person and as a player; I know what is needed to succeed at a club like this.



"We're at the beginning of our journey under the manager and his coaching staff. We've been successful already this season, but we want much more. There's a great opportunity to create something special here, and I'm going to give everything to be part of that."

Shaw was part of the United side that won the

League Cup in February to end a six-year trophy drought.

The Red Devils are in the hunt for more silverware as they face Sevilla in the Europa League quarter-finals and Brighton in the last four of the FA Cup. But three games without a win in the Premier League has seen them drop outside the top four.



Alcaraz, Nadal pull out of Monte Carlo

AP ■ MADRID

Carlos Alcaraz pulled out of the upcoming Monte Carlo Masters on Tuesday because of hand and back injury problems.

The world number two seemed set to battle Novak Djokovic for the top rank in the French Open warm-up tournament which starts on Saturday.

"After two months abroad, I am happy to return home but sad because I finished my last match in Miami with physical discomfort," said Alcaraz on Twitter. "I will not be able to go to Monte Carlo to start the clay court tour. I have post-traumatic arthritis in my left hand and muscular discomfort in the spine that needs rest to prepare for everything that is to come."

The 2022 US Open winner's withdrawal follows that of compatriot Rafael Nadal, who said he was not ready to compete at Monte Carlo because of a hip injury. Nadal's preparation for a tilt at a record-extending 15th

French Open title suffered a blow when he announced his withdrawal.

"Hi everyone, I'm still not ready to compete at the highest level," the 36-year-old Spaniard tweeted. "I will not be able to play in one of the most important tournaments of my career, Monte Carlo."

The Monte Carlo tournament, which Nadal has won 11 times, begins on Saturday, while the French Open starts May 28.

Nadal said he was hoping to return soon from the hip flexor injury he sustained in the Australian Open in January, suffering a second round exit against Mackenzie McDonald.

The 22-time Grand Slam champion pulled out of hard-court tournaments at Indian Wells and Miami, with his sights set on a return at the start of the clay court season. Record Monte Carlo Masters champion Nadal won the tournament eight consecutive times between 2005 and 2012.

Madrid must not go crazy in cup Clasico: Ancelotti

AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid will try to keep cool heads as they bid to overturn a 1-0 deficit in the Copa del Rey Clasico semi-final second leg, Carlo Ancelotti said Tuesday.

The Spanish champions visit arch-rivals Barcelona on Wednesday as they bid to avoid a fourth consecutive defeat in the derby.

Eder Militao's own goal split the teams in the first leg in March as Madrid dominated but could not break down Barcelona's solid defence.

"The idea is not to go crazy to try and score a goal," said Madrid coach Ancelotti.

"The idea is to play a complete game, with and without the ball.

"We won't go mad, because you can score a goal in the fifth minute and then let in two."

Real Madrid have lost three consecutive Clasicos, defeated by Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final in January, the cup first leg and most recently 2-1 in La Liga at Camp Nou.

"Barca have beaten us the last



three times, so I think now it's our turn to win," said Ancelotti.

The coach thought his team played well in the latter two games.

"We have to evaluate that in the last two games we have done well, we don't just look at the results," added Ancelotti.

"We were close to winning the last match at the Camp Nou."

The Italian coach confirmed defender Antonio Rudiger is fit, meaning Madrid have their full squad available aside from Ferland Mendy.

Ancelotti admitted it was difficult to choose between his midfielders, with Toni Kroos, Luka Modric, Aurelien Tchouameni and Eduardo Camavinga all vying to start.

"The hardest thing is to choose (who plays)," said Ancelotti.

"Not just today, always. The mentality of the players will not change, they want to play from the start, they don't want to come on."

"It's very hard to choose a side, because obviously there are more than 11 who deserve to play, there are 14 or 15."

Ceferin poised for new term as UEFA president



AP ■ NYON

Aleksander Ceferin stands unopposed for a new term as president of UEFA when European football's governing body meets in

Lisbon on Wednesday. The 55-year-old Slovenian lawyer, elected in 2016 following the downfall of Frenchman Michel Platini, is therefore assured of a further four years in the role despite

a turbulent second term overshadowed by the breakaway European Super League project.

The UEFA Congress in the Portuguese capital comes just a few weeks after Gianni Infantino was re-elected as president of FIFA, also unopposed. Ceferin has had his differences with Infantino, with the UEFA chief notably one of the main voices against FIFA's proposals to host the World Cup every two years instead of the current four.

That idea has been abandoned by Infantino, but the European Super League is not dead and buried, with Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus continuing to pursue the project.

A lawsuit has been launched against UEFA and FIFA at the European Court of Justice, accusing the governing bodies of abusing their power by threatening to expel clubs and players interested in joining a breakaway league.

A final ruling is expected in the coming weeks, although the court's advocate general, whose opinions are often followed by judges, provided a first ruling favourable to UEFA in December.

Barca call on Liga boss to quit over ref corruption affair

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona on Monday called on La Liga president Javier Tebas to quit over "false" accusations allegedly made by him concerning their referee corruption case.

The Spanish giants made the demand after a newspaper claimed Tebas had written to the Spanish public prosecutor accusing two former Barca presidents of wrongdoing. Last month the Catalan club was charged with corruption after payments of more than 7.3 million euros (\$7.8 million) to a company owned by a former refereeing chief were uncovered.

In a statement following La Vanguardia's report Barcelona claimed Tebas "presented false proof" to the public prosecutor "to incriminate our club".

"FC Barcelona wants to express its deep anger, indignation and disgust," the statement read.

It went on to demand that Tebas "appears in public to provide answers", adding "for the dignity and respect of the presidency of La Liga Mr Tebas should resign".

Tebas in response denied "accusing anyone" in a post on social media. In Monday's statement a bruised Barcelona claimed they were the victims "of a media lynching for something that never happened — Barca have never bought off referees".

Eriksen close to making Manchester United return

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Christian Eriksen's early return from an ankle injury could give Manchester United's bid for success on three fronts before the end of the season a boost.

The Danish midfielder was expected to be sidelined until late April but returned to team training on Tuesday.

United will have to cope without Eriksen and the suspended Casemiro once more for the visit of Brentford to Old Trafford on Wednesday and their presence has been badly missed in recent weeks.

Erik ten Hag's men have not won a Premier League game since mid-February due to a dip in form and a series of cup commitments.

"The midfield department, games will be decided always in the midfield," said Ten Hag of the importance of Eriksen and Casemiro at his pre-match press conference on Tuesday.

CWG champion Sanjita Chanu slapped with 4-year ban by NADA panel for failing dope test

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two-time Commonwealth Games champion Indian weightlifter Sanjita Chanu has been handed a four-year ban by the National Anti Doping Agency's (NADA) Disciplinary Panel for failing a dope test last year.

The 29-year-old had tested positive for an anabolic steroid — Drostanolone Metabolite — that features in the World Anti-doping Agency's (WADA) prohibited list. Her dope sample was collected in-competition on September 30, 2022 during the National Games in Gujarat last year.

"... It is held that the Athlete has violated Article 2.1 & 2.2 of the NADA ADR, 2021, she is hereby sanctioned with an ineligibility of four (04) years as per Article 10.2.1 of the NADA ADR, 2021," the three-member

NADA Anti-Doping Disciplinary panel headed by Chaitanya Mahajan said in the order.

Sanjita's ban will commence from November 12, 2022, the date of her provisional suspension.

"The period of ineligibility shall commence from the date of provisional suspension i.e. 12.11.2022. It shall be noted that the athlete has failed to satisfy the panel that the ADRV was non-intentional as per Article 10.2.1.1 of the NADA ADR, 2023."

This is a huge setback for Sanjita, who will be stripped of the National Games silver medal as a result of the positive test.

"As per Article 10.10 of the NADA ADR, 2021, the athlete is hereby disqualified of all of the individual results obtained in the said Event with all Consequences, including forfeiture of all medals, points and prizes since



30-09-2022," the order, dated March 31, read. Sanjita, who represented herself in the disciplinary panel hearings, could not be reached for her comments.

Sanjita had won gold in 48kg ahead of Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Mirabai Chanu at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. At the 2018 edition of the CWG in Gold Coast, she was crowned champion in the 53kg category.

The Manipuri has the

option to appeal against the decision of the disciplinary panel. She can do that by approaching to the appeals panel of the NADA within 21 days from the date of receipt of the decision.

During the hearing, Sanjita had denied intentionally taking any prohibited substance and submitted that she had taken all due care and caution while consuming food and supplements.

The panel said that "the present case appears to be a case of systematic doping where the prohibited substance was used by the athlete".

Messi 'likely' to leave PSG at end of season



AP ■ MADRID

Lionel Messi is "much more likely" to leave Paris Saint-Germain at the end of the season than sign a new deal, a source close to the club said on Tuesday.

"The dynamics have completely changed with PSG less pushing to renew (contract)," the source said, adding that there was "no deal, no exit yet. But exit is much more likely."

World Cup winner Messi, who will turn 36 in June, joined in 2021 on a two-year deal which expires at the end of this campaign. On Sunday, the Argentine's name was jeered by some PSG fans as the teams were announced prior to the 1-0 home defeat against Lyon in Ligue 1.

Supporters of the Qatar-owned club are unhappy at the malaise around the team since they were eliminated from the Champions League in the last 16 by Bayern Munich last month.

Switzerland to host women's Euro 2025

AP ■ NYON

Switzerland will host the 2025 Women's European Championship, European football's governing body UEFA said on Tuesday.

Switzerland last hosted a major football tournament in 2008, staging that year's edition of the men's Euros along with neighbours Austria.

"This is a historic day for Switzerland, the SFA and women's football," Swiss FA president Dominique Blanc said in a statement.

"This major step will shape the development of women's football at all levels."

The Swiss FA said it would set up a body responsible for the organisation of the event.

GT maintain perfect start RR ready for Punjab Kings challenge

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The inept technique of young Indian batters against top quality fast bowling compounded Delhi Capitals' worries as they succumbed to an embarrassing six-wicket defeat at the hands of defending champions Gujarat Titans in an IPL match here on Tuesday.

Mohammed Shami (3/41 in 4 overs) and Alzarri Joseph (2/29 in 4 overs) intimidated the Delhi top-order in the first 10 overs while Rashid Khan (3/31 in 4 overs) hardly faced any trouble keeping the batters under check to restrict the home team to a below-par 162 for 8.

Despite Anrich Nortje (2/39 in 4 overs)'s best efforts, young Sai Sudharsan (62 not out off 48 balls) anchored the chase calmly with Titans winning their second successive game in 18.1 overs.

David Miller's (31 not out off 16 balls) two sixes and four off Mukesh Kumar in the 16th over towards the end sealed DC's fate decisively.

Axar Patel (36 off 22) was DC's saving grace with bat but since left-handers were batting, David Warner couldn't give him a single over as the match-up wasn't compatible.

DC have now lost two matches on the trot and while it is early days in the tournament, it will be surprising if this team, with the kind of Indian talent it has, finishes in the top five let alone be a title contender. The cupboard in terms of both Indian batting and bowling talent looks bare and inadequate while competing with the best in the business.

Had Axar not used his long handle to good effect, even 150 would have looked a distant reality for DC.



Just a month after Kotla produced a turner for the Test against Australia, the change in nature of the track was palpable as the balls literally flew off the surface.

At times, it felt that it wasn't David Warner (37 off 32 balls) or a Sarfaraz Khan's (30 off 33 balls) bat that hit the ball but the other way round.

Shami literally beat Warner's bat for fun in his first two overs, often cutting him into half while Alzarri twice forced umpires to call for concussion checks as Sarfaraz and Abhishek Porel (20 off 11 balls) were hit on the head by well-directed bouncers. To be fair, both looked dazed.

Even an international like Rilee Rossouw (0) got a Test match like bouncer first up and was snapped brilliantly at backward point by a diving Rahul Tewatia.

Not being able to avoid the short ball was more due to lack of technique and not regularly facing bowlers of Shami or Alzarri's quality became their undoing.

Sarfaraz, a heavy-duty scorer in domestic cricket, couldn't improvise as he found the pace too quick to manoeuvre or improvise his shot selection.

The first two games in IPL against international bowlers is a proof that why former chairman Chetan Sharma's committee or even the current quartet of selectors are wary of picking him for international assignments. A good domestic player, who is out-of-depth against top-grade bowlers.

And it's not Sarfaraz alone. Even Prithvi Shaw isn't inspiring confidence while facing a bowler of Shami's calibre.

Shaw's (7) inept technique against fast rising deliveries was once again exposed by the seasoned Shami, who pitched one back of length at a fair pace. The delivery kept climbing on Shaw as he top-edged a pull-shot that was gleefully accepted by Alzarri at mid-on.

Mitchell Marsh was bowled for the second time, this time played on off Shami's bowling as skipper Hardik Pandya very wisely gave him a third over within the Powerplay and the job was done. Skipper Warner, who literally played and missed during the first few overs, still used experience to ride on the pace and bounce before Alzarri got rid of him.

While Gujarat chased, Nortje boled Wriddhiman Saha with a lethal off-cutter and another fast delivery that moved enough to knock back Shubman Gill's off-stump. DC had some hope when Khaleel Ahmed had Hardik Pandya caught behind but Sudharsan and Vijay Shankar (29) added 53 off 7.2 overs to keep the chase on track. Miller then added finishing touches.

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Rajasthan Royals would be banking on their near-perfect combinations in almost all departments of the game to put up another commanding performance when they take on a strong Punjab Kings side in an IPL match here on Wednesday.

The Royals would be buoyed by the massive 72-run victory against Sunrisers Hyderabad, who were outsmarted by last year's runners-up in every aspect of the game on Sunday.

With Yashasvi Jaiswal, red-hot England white-ball skipper Jos Buttler and captain Sanju Samson smashing half-centuries against SRH, the Royals' dominance with the bat was there for all to see, while their bowlers, led by Yuzvendra Chahal (4/17) and New Zealand quick Trent Boult (2/21), were more than a handful for SRH.

But with Punjab Kings also giving an indication of their immense firepower with both the bat and the ball in their seven-run DLS win against Kolkata Knight Riders at Mohali, the match on Wednesday promises to give the spectators in Guwahati good value for money.

With RR playing two of



their 'home' matches in the Northeastern city, a winning performance from Samson's side will not only build their brand value in Guwahati, it will also expand their fan base in the region, which has seen precious little IPL action over the years.

The depth in Royals' batting is such that it can withstand any bowling attack. If young Yashasvi's 37-ball 54 at the top showed how quickly he has matured as an opener, Buttler seemed to be carrying on from where he had left off in the previous season, smashing a 22-ball 54.

The only weak link, if any, seemed to be their middle where Devdutt Padikkal and Riyan Parag were both dismissed cheaply, before West Indian Shimron Hetmyer took the team beyond the 200-run mark.

With a bowling lineup boasting of one of the premier pacers in the world in Boult along with two Indian stalwarts in Chahal and R Ashwin, the Royals can soften up the most resolute batting sides. And PBKS know they have an uphill task when the two teams clash at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium.

While the experience of top-order India batter Shikhar Dhawan will come in handy along with the bowling prowess of young left-arm India pacer Arshdeep Singh, the team would be eagerly awaiting the return of England power-hitter Liam Livingstone, who missed the opener against KKR after not getting the fitness clearance from the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB). The batter had suffered a knee injury in December last.

The English pair of Livingstone and pace bowling all-rounder Sam Curran — the most expensive buy ever in IPL history at Rs 18.50 crore — could be PBKS' trump card this season along with the lanky left-arm quick Arshdeep.

Iyer to undergo surgery abroad, to miss entire IPL and WTC final

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India batter Shreyas Iyer will miss the entire IPL as well as the World Test Championship final in June against Australia as he is set to undergo a back surgery abroad, according to BCCI sources.

Iyer, who is the captain of IPL side Kolkata Knight Riders, is expected to be out of action for at least five months. That

would mean that his participation in the 50-over World Cup in India in October-November could be touch and go.

"Yes, he will have his back surgery abroad. He is likely to be out of action for at least five months with full rehabilitation," a BCCI source PTI on conditions of anonymity. The WTC final will be played between India and Australia in London from June 7.

The recurring lower-back injury had forced Iyer out of the final Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy last month, before ruling him out of the ODI series against Australia that followed. His injury surfaced in December last year, following India's tour of Bangladesh.

In Iyer's absence, Nitish Rana was named interim KKR captain ahead of this IPL season.

Starc, Zampa will be Australia's go-to bowlers during ODI WC: Ponting

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Australia captain Ricky Ponting expects his country's pace-bowling stalwart Mitchell Starc and leg-spinner Adam Zampa to do the star turn when the ODI World Cup is held in India later this year. Starc, 33, was in sublime form during the three-match ODI series against India recently picking up eight wickets, including a five-for in the third game at Visakhapatnam, as the visitors won the series 2-1. The tall quick made India's T20 specialist middle-order batter Suryakumar Yadav look like a sitting duck, dismissing him for nought in the first two fixtures.

Zampa, after being ignored for the four-Test Border-Gavaskar series, also packed a punch in ODIs, grabbing four wickets in the third game at Chennai as Australia won the decider by 21 runs.

"It's the overall package of Mitchell Starc. He's six-foot-five, bowls in the high 140-km per hour, he's a left-arm

and he swings the new ball back in as Suryakumar found out (during the ODI series)," Ponting said on the ICC Review on Tuesday.

The tall quick had claimed the most scalps at the 2019 World Cup, after sharing the honour with New Zealand's Trent Boult in the 2015 edition.

"When he's on song, he's as good as anyone in the world and has been for a long time. For lots of strange reasons, there has always been people willing to sit back and take potshots at Mitchell Starc for some of his performances. But if you have a cold hard look at the facts, particularly in white-ball cricket, his numbers are absolutely outstanding," added Ponting. "He's shown in that series (against India) just how dangerous he can be with the new ball, regardless of the conditions."

Zampa was visibly disappointed after being given a cold shoulder by selectors for the Border-Gavaskar series, but on his return for the ODIs, the 31-

year-old showed how big a threat he can be in Indian conditions, taking four wickets in the ODIs and restricting India to only 4.88 runs an over.

The tweaker has surged to the top of the wicket-takers list in the World Cup Super League, with 41 scalps in 18 matches at an average of 19.73. "He's probably been Australia's key bowler in all white-ball cricket for a long time, along with Mitchell Starc," Ponting said.

"Starc has been great but Adam Zampa for four or five years now has been a real revelation. He's been the backbone of the Australian bowling attack which probably led to him being a little bit disappointed not to be picked on a Test tour to India.

"But he's an outstanding performer. For a leg-spinner to become a very, very consistent performer, it's very rare that teams get on top of him and get hold of him. He's going to be one of Australia's trump cards (for ODI World Cup) for sure," added Ponting.



Angry Dhoni warns bowlers to bowl fewer no-balls, wides

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni has issued a stern warning to his bowlers to drastically cut down on no-balls and wides in their upcoming IPL matches, saying if they continue to give away free runs to the opposition, they will have to play under a new captain.

Dhoni's warning came even as the four-time IPL champions defeated Lucknow Super Giants by 12 runs at the MA Chidambaram stadium on Monday.

The wicketkeeper-batter was not amused with the way his bowlers sprayed the ball all over the place, sending down three no-balls and 13 wides, though LSG were still restrict-

ed to 205 for 7 while chasing 218.

CSK had conceded four wides and two no-balls in the opener against defending champions Gujarat Titans in a close match, which Dhoni's side lost by five wickets.

Young CSK pacer Rajvardhan Hangargekar bowled three wides and a no-ball in that match, while on Monday, against LSG, he bowled three more wides.

Another CSK quick Tushar Deshpande, while taking two wickets on Monday, was guilty of bowling four wides and three no-balls.

Veteran CSK bowler Deepak Chahar too was wayward on Monday, giving away five extra runs through wides.

RCB's Patidar ruled out for entire season

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) top-order batter Rajat Patidar was on Tuesday ruled out of the entire IPL season due to an Achilles heel injury, dealing a big blow to the team.

The 29-year-old was RCB's third-highest scorer last year with 333 runs in eight matches at 55.50, including two fifties. He hit the fastest century by an Indian in IPL in the Qualifier 1.

"Unfortunately, Rajat Patidar has been ruled out of IPL 2023 due to an Achilles Heel injury," said RCB in a statement.

"We wish Rajat a speedy recovery and will continue to support him during the process. The coaches and management



have decided not to name a replacement player for Rajat just yet," it added.

Initially, it was thought that Patidar, who had picked up the injury prior to joining the RCB camp, would at least be available for the second half of the IPL season, but the announcement on Tuesday has added to the team's problems.

The news came at a time when Australian Josh Hazlewood, the team's second-most successful bowler with 20 wickets in 12 matches last season, has indicated that he will not be match-fit till the fourth week of April.

On Monday, RCB's England pacer Reece Topley dislocated his right shoulder while fielding during the team's eight-wicket win over Mumbai Indians here.

MI has invested in youngsters and time for them to show up: Boucher

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mumbai Indians head coach Mark Boucher is confident that the youngsters on whom the franchise has been investing for the past few years will stand up and be counted in this edition of the Indian Premier League.

While RCB thrashed MI by eight wickets on Monday, the find of last season, Tilak Varma, once again showed a lot of promise along with Punjab youngster Nehal Wadhwa.

Varma cracked an unbeaten 46-ball 84, while Wadehra scored 21 off 13 deliveries.

"The IPL is a massive event and it's going to be a great opportunity for some of our young boys to really show up," Boucher said in a media release issued by MI.

"The way Mumbai Indians have selected their squads over the last few years has been, how you invest in youngsters for the future. It's now time for those youngsters to show up and basically get

the opportunities," the former Proteas keeper said.

MI's bowling coach Shane Bond credited the youngsters for helping MI reaching 171 in the opening game.

"Tilak played brilliantly, and so did the other youngsters," he said.

Speaking after his innings, Varma said, "I always back my shots, and I was doing the same thing here. I was asking my partners what could be a good total here and going accordingly."



Plan to introduce home and away format in WPL from season 2: Dhimal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Buoyed by the success of the inaugural Women's Premier League, IPL chairman Arun Dhimal on Tuesday said that they plan to introduce the home and away format from season two but the number of teams will remain five for the next three years.

The first ever WPL turned out to be a hit among fans and players but as the tournament was staged within tough timelines and right after the Women's T20 World Cup, the BCCI decided to organise all the games across two venues in Mumbai.

Termining hosting of WPL the biggest challenge of his tenure, Dhimal said having home and away games immensely help teams in building a fan base and the board wants to take that route as early as next season.

"Well begun is half done. It has been a great beginning for WPL and

going forward it is going to be much better than what we have seen so far. We have started with five teams but going forward there is scope for additional team given the pool of the players that is going to come in the years to follow.

"We are hoping increase in the number of teams but for the coming three seasons will remain five. We are surely looking at home and away format, we will see which time slot is available considering India's international commitment and take a call.

"From a fan engagement point of view it is very important that we go for home and away format," Dhimal said.

Fans turned up in sizeable numbers to watch the games at Brabourne and DY Patil Stadium. The event had garnered massive attention even before the first ball was bowled with the teams rights fetching BCCI close to ₹4700



crore and media rights ₹951 crore.

"It has been a phenomenal ride so far and quite a challenging one given the time slot we had to start the WPL. We are satisfied with the way things have progressed, we did not have much of window as the World Cup was there and the girls had just about a week to come back and start.

"Everything (media rights, team rights, player auction) happened one after the other but the way tournament was received, it was phenomenal," Dhimal said.

One reason for not introducing a sixth team right away could be the lack of quality local talent. The world's best displayed their exemplary skills in the competition but leaving aside Saika Ishaque, Kanika Ahuja and Shreyanka Patil, not many uncapped Indian players were able to turn heads on.

"Our national team has done very well over the last couple of years. U-

19 girls won the World Cup. Given how the WPL was received, we are very hopeful that we will have a bigger pool of players and their fitness and fielding standard will improve immensely going forward."

Three out of five teams are owned by legacy IPL franchisees, who have seen the value of the men's league reach astronomical proportions.

INTRODUCTION OF IMPACT PLAYER

Dhimal added that the introduction of Impact player in the IPL and teams being ticked after toss was done to mitigate the toss advantage.

"We have seen dew play a major role. Winning the toss is seen as an advantage and to mitigate that we thought to introduce 'Impact Player' and give the teams chance to pick teams post toss so they can pick the right eleven," he added.